



UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

Widening circles:
Case studies in transformation



Consolidated Report of DEISA Case Studies

Melissa Steyn,
Principal Researcher and Director

Claire Kelly,
Project Manager and Research Co-ordinator

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Intercultural and Diversity Studies of Southern Africa (iNCUDISA)

University of Cape Town, Private Bag X3, Rondebosch 7701, South Africa

Series Editor: Melissa Steyn, director, iNCUDISA

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ABOUT THE SERIES

Within the context of a changing South Africa, which itself is grappling with finding its place in a global community, every organisation and institution is affected and must address questions of transformation if it is to survive.

iNCUDISA is publishing this series of case studies to contribute to a necessary information base for practical use by organisations committed to taking up this challenge in constructive and effective ways. In this endeavour, we are all sailing new waters, and need to share the charts as we go. Every time an organisation or institution embarks on a process, their experience can provide meaningful guidelines for others.

Each context has particular permutations and needs to be understood on its own terms. Case studies show exactly how the details in a specific context are addressed. Where one is dealing with change management, there is no single model that can be applied across the board without careful contextualisation. In whatever way the underlying generic issues may be articulated in an organisation, interventions have to be appropriate and carefully structured to meet the needs of that situation. Case studies are useful in showing this process of engagement with a particular context at a particular time – the misunderstandings, successes, diversity issues, conflicts, breakthroughs – that form the daily lived experience of a changing environment.

This series rests on the principle that the more carefully one understands the specific issues of a particular case and the degree of success it achieves, the more useful it becomes to people facing similar issues in a different context. This title, the fifth in the series, provides an overview of the lessons learnt from 12 case studies.

Melissa Steyn (series editor)

Other titles in the series:

Case study 1: Diversity intervention for health educators by Ismail Slama (2002)

Case study 2: Because the country says they have to change – A diversity intervention in a South African Police Service (SAPS) station by Andrew Faull (2006)

Case study 3: Networks of Accountability – HIV/Aids Action Research in Action on Western Cape farms by Mikki van Zyl (2006)

Case study 4: Not naming “race” – Some medical students’ experiences and perceptions of “race” and racism at UCT’s Health Sciences faculty by Zimitri Erasmus and Jaques de Wet (2003)

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DEISA Steering Committee Members



Dr. Dorrian Aiken
Director, Procorp



Professor Kurt April
Graduate School of Business
University of Cape Town



Professor Lize Booysen
Antioch University
(previously UNISA)



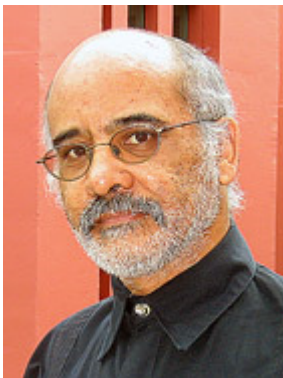
Professor Philomena Essed
Antioch University



Claire Kelly
iNCUDISA, Project
Coordinator
University of Cape Town



Stella Nkomo
University of Pretoria
(previously UNISA)



Professor Crain Soudien
Acting Deputy Vice
Chancellor
University of Cape Town



A/Professor Melissa Steyn
Director, iNCUDISA
University of Cape Town



Isaac Swafo
Director, Procorp

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Introduction

DEISA (Diversity and Equity Interventions in South Africa) is a research programme which studies the transformation “industry” in South Africa, exploring issues such as the kinds of interventions being undertaken under the rubric of diversity and equity, how these are experienced by people working in organisations, the theoretical frameworks used by practitioners and, especially, how they may or may not articulate with the quest for social justice in a democratising South Africa. The project examined: 1) a questionnaire submitted to diversity practitioners across South Africa; and 2) diversity interventions conducted at 12 South African organisations. These organisations included government institutions and private-sector companies and ranged from multinationals to small, family-owned concerns. They were situated mostly in the two major hubs of the South African economy: Gauteng and Cape Town. Two studies were in other regions of the country: Mpumalanga and North West Province.

2. Background

The diversity of the South African population remains largely untapped as a resource, and more often than not is (regarded as) a source of difficulty. Widespread reform has taken place in the labour sector since 1994. Some organisations are employing consultants or setting up internal departments to deal with management and organisational issues that have arisen with the challenges of new legislation, but there are considerable differences between the ways in which they deal with changes in staff profiles and cope with the challenges of a diverse workforce. At the time of this study’s commencement, little research had been conducted to show how successful these programmes and interventions were, or how different approaches work for different organisations and different problem areas. South Africa has not yet paid sufficient attention to producing good local research that grounds and relativises the research coming from academic centres such as the United States.

3. Theoretical Framework

The DEISA programme locates itself within a paradigm that can best be called “critical diversity theory”. This particular stance towards diversity:

- departs from a profound commitment to the values of democracy, social justice, equity and empowerment;
- recognises that the incorporation of people that have been marginalised should not involve a process of assimilation, but a transformation of the cultural milieu in order to bring about new social meanings and representations;
- rejects essentialised notions of identity, naturalised notions of race, gender, etc., and discourses which reify homogeneity;
- stresses that identity and difference are constructed within specific historical, cultural and power relations.

By these criteria, critical diversity interventions should be recognised by their effectiveness in preparing the ground for transformative processes of increasingly democratic and equitable modes of organisation.

4. Aims of the study

The study does not address debates on the value of diversity for the “business case” or “bottom line” of the organisation, nor indeed to provide any justification or rationalisation for the diversification of organisations. It merely seeks to understand more of what is being done in the name of diversity interventions, and how these would “square” with deep transformation.

5. Methodology

The project consisted of two main forms of data collection. First, we conducted a nationwide survey of diversity practitioners and their practices, and followed this up with an in-depth questionnaire. Second, we conducted 12 comprehensive case studies in organisations across the country.

5.1. Diversity practitioner questionnaire and database

A desktop study enabled an extensive database of diversity practitioners to be placed on iNCUDISA’s website. In-depth, self-completing questionnaires were emailed to over 500 diversity practitioners across South Africa. The questionnaires were designed to investigate the types, orientation and approaches of diversity interventions being offered. A total of 43 completed questionnaires were returned to the research office. Although this seems like a low response rate, the depth and quality of data allowed for extensive qualitative analysis.

5.2. *Case studies on diversity interventions*

Case studies were conducted by diversity studies MPhil and MBA students, under the supervision of senior researchers, in organisational settings at geographically diverse regions. At each site the organisation was invited to identify what they regarded as the diversity intervention. The study then attempted to assess the degree to which the named intervention had made an impact on the organisation. This “impact” was not considered in terms of “bottom line”, but in terms of the extent that differences were discernible in demographics, policies and the extent to which the members of the organisation felt a palpable change in the organisation’s approach to their differences.

6. Questionnaire analysis

We offer the diversity “Rubik” cube as a model for management, practitioners and academics to identify the dimensions that provide for deep transformative practice.

7. Case study analysis

For the purposes of this report, the case studies are discussed according to whether they fell under the private or public sector, using a generic naming process in order to ensure anonymity (except where we were explicitly asked by the organisation to make their identity known). The case studies that fell under the private sector were: Small Food-Production Company (SFPC); Small Clothing Manufacturer (SCM); Retail Company (RC); Financial-Services Company (FSC); Large Industrial Company (LIC); Large South African Manufacturer (LSAM) and Commercial Organisation (CO). The public/state work environments studied were: state-owned Financial Institution (FI); Local Government Department (LGD); Institute of Higher Learning (IHL); South African Police Service station (SAPS); and a large, state-owned commercialised resources enterprise (Sekupu).

7.1. *Overview of policy frameworks driving diversity initiatives*

The vision and mission of an organisation represent its overarching philosophy and is therefore the defining framework in policy formation. Organisational policy is a means of operationalising these values. Thus, it was useful to examine the way in which diversity featured in the aspirations and values of the organisations *and* the extent to which these were operationalised and supported in their policies and structures.

7.2. *Description of the diversity interventions*

As part of the research design, interventions were identified by the organisations themselves. This provided an indication of what was regarded as diversity interventions by both the practitioners and the organisations. To elicit information about the intervention, questions were asked involving: why it was initiated; the nature of the intervention; what issues it addressed; who it targeted, who designed it; whether it addressed issues of power; and its ideological underpinnings.

8. Comparison across studies – Emerging themes

Although each case study presented particular contexts, issues and challenges, there were themes that emerged across all 12 cases. Overall, eight key themes were identified. The findings of such a comprehensive study are inevitably complex, but these themes represent the most salient and important observed trends and emerging issues:

1. Inattention to contextual realities
2. Reduction of diversity to EE
3. Neglect of “other” diversities
4. Quality of interventions
5. Environmental challenges and hurdles
6. Management resistance
7. The predominance of racism
8. Climates of fear and suspicion

9. Overview: The eight themes

Overall, the case studies revealed that the level of meaningful engagement with diversity was variable and, even in the best cases, lacking in deep transformative potential. In a very few cases we saw the integration of diversity into core business operations, which resulted in more substantial and systemically supported interventions. Mostly, however, we saw very little understanding of the importance and value of working with diversity successfully; rather, there was a compliance-motivated reaction to EE legislation. Most organisations continued to conflate diversity with EE compliance, thereby reducing diversity to a numbers game and keeping discriminatory power relations intact.

At another level, however, most organisations were still struggling with simply “getting the numbers right”. The profound immovability that we saw in the organisations’ demographics is a

concern in that it perpetuates and entrenches the notion that management is white and male, and workers are black (male and female). It is noticeable that organisations which had been “forced” to make the “case” for transformation (as when tendering for government business) displayed a keener commitment to redressing unjust practices (especially on the basis of race) than organisations which had not. Having said this, even in cases where interventions were more robust, experiences of marginalisation and silencing remained a problem. Old power patterns were actively entrenched in all the organisations, with respondents even reporting fear of victimisation should they upset the status quo.

Implementation of transformation initiatives exhibited as a serious problem. Organisations did not create structures to hold and sustain whatever initiatives were implemented.

Unfair discrimination on the basis of gender seemed more flagrant than on the basis of race; gender discrimination was normalised within organisational practices while racial discrimination was publicly accepted as taboo. More disturbing even were the enormous silences on issues such as homophobia, xenophobia, cultural and religious intolerance, etc. None of the organisations or diversity practitioners in these cases were dealing with these very significant sources of inequality and oppression in our society.

10. Theoretical tools for critical diversity practice in South Africa

Two “tools” emerged out of the long, careful and considered engagement with the data presented through this project.

10.1. The practitioner-organisation interface

Although this project started out as an evaluation of diversity practitioners’ practice, it became clear that the contexts in which diversity practitioners are conducting their work could be more decisive in determining the interventions’ “success” than the interventions themselves. The cases have shown that organisational environments hostile or unsupportive of transformation can and have scuppered the most theoretically sound diversity and equity interventions. Thus, the success of any diversity intervention is a function of the interface between practitioner and organisation, with one enabling (or disabling) the other.

10.2. The diversity literate organisation

The original intention of this project was to develop codes of good practice in order to standardise diversity practice in South Africa. Five years of research has, however, illuminated that it is not more procedures and legislation that is missing but, fundamentally, a shared vision of what is desirable and possible in terms of social justice in our organisations. What is absent is the language and tools to engage this vision. The task at hand is to develop a shared language for diversity practitioners, management and staff in order to facilitate a conversation about diversity that has social justice as its end.

The way ahead requires that both practitioners and organisations operate in a framework that engages diversity critically. The second conceptual tool generated out of this research is Steyn's (2009) notion of the "diversity literate organisation". This is an aspirational model of an organisation that has the tools to engage diversity from inside a concern for social justice. The analytical criteria employed to evaluate the presence of diversity literacy in an organisation is measured to the extent that people across the whole organisation possess:

1. **a recognition of the symbolic and material value of dominant identities, such as whiteness, heterosexuality, masculinity, ablebodiedness, etc.** (for example, its people will recognise how what is considered "normal" and "desirable" is racialised [i.e., white] and gendered [i.e., masculine]);
2. **the analytic skills to unpack how systems of oppression intersect, interlock, co-construct and constitute each other** (for example, people will be able to understand why organisations still see racialised and gendered hierarchies: white males in top management and black women in cleaning positions);
3. **the definition of oppressive systems such as racism as current social problems rather than historical legacies** (for example, people will understand that black people experience discrimination, exclusion and marginalisation on the basis of their racialisation *now*, and not just under apartheid);
4. **an understanding that social identities are a learned outcome of social practices** (for example, people will understand that there are no "natural" roles or abilities for men and women, that men and women *learn* roles, and that these are defined in terms of gender power relations);

5. **a diversity grammar and vocabulary that facilitates discussion of race, racism and antiracism as well as the parallel concepts employed in the analysis of other forms of oppression** (for example, people will share understandings of racism, sexism, etc. and, using these understandings, be able to have a conversation that is honest and empowering);
6. **the ability to translate (interpret) coded hegemonic practices** (for example, people will be able to recognise everyday racism for what it is: racism);
7. **an understanding of the ways that diversity hierarchies and institutionalised oppressions are mediated by class inequality** (for example, people will understand that who is rich and who is poor, who is management and who is working class is racialised, and why that is so);
8. **an engagement with the issues of transformation of oppressive systems with the aim of deepening democracy in all levels of social organisation** (for example, managers exhibit as much concern for staff experiences of racism, sexism, etc. as they do for operational concerns).

These guiding principles form useful (and currently absent) goalposts for any diversity intervention working towards social justice. How they translate into organisationally relevant *everyday* practices (establishment of structures, policies, assessments, codes of behaviour, etc.) is for the diversity practitioner and organisational leadership to decide. This is important as all of these practices must be responsive to the organisation's context in terms of its industry, history, size, location, etc. Nevertheless, an intervention that results in a highly diversity literate organisation is much more likely to create conditions for more inclusive, non-discriminatory, empowering practices.

1. INTRODUCTION

DEISA (Diversity and Equity Interventions in South Africa) is a research programme which studies the transformation “industry” in South Africa, exploring issues such as the kinds of interventions being undertaken under the rubric of diversity and equity, how these are experienced by people working in organisations, the theoretical frameworks used by practitioners, and, especially, how they may or may not articulate with the quest for social justice in a democratising South Africa. The programme also aims to develop guidelines for good practice for organisations and practitioners, as well as materials for use by practitioners. In the long term, DEISA should be able to contribute towards the professionalisation of the field. A comprehensive database of diversity practitioners has been compiled.

The project that is the subject of this report examined: 1) a questionnaire submitted to diversity practitioners across South Africa; and 2) diversity interventions conducted at 12 South African organisations. These organisations included government institutions and private-sector companies and ranged from multinationals to small, family-owned concerns. Although it was based at Intercultural and Diversity Studies (iNCUDISA) at the University of Cape Town, the research team working on the project was interdisciplinary and interinstitutional, including researchers from the School of Business Leadership (SBL) at UNISA, the University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands and Antioch University in the USA. The project was funded by the South African-Netherlands Partnership for Alternatives in Development (SANPAD), and funding for further development of the DEISA programme was secured from the South African National Research Foundation (NRF).

2. BACKGROUND

International thinking on human rights increasingly recognises diversity as a human rights issue, as is explicitly stated in documents such as the Declaration of the World Conference against Racism (United Nations, 2001), which was held in 2001. With the pressures of rapidly changing internal demographics within national states, as well as the ever-accelerating interconnectedness of communities across the globe, the study of diversity is recognised as an area of academic priority. Consequently, there is an enormous thrust to theorise questions of diversity, coexistence and identity, on which sound progressive policy and practice can be formulated (Adler, 1997; Essed, 2002; Kahane, 2001, 2002; Mindell, 1995; O’Hara Devereaux & Johansen, 1994; Senge, 2000).

Though much academic effort has gone into theorising diversity issues internationally, the conclusions drawn from one context cannot be generalised simplistically to another. South Africa has not yet paid sufficient attention to producing good local research that grounds and relativises the research coming from academic centres such as the United States (Steyn, 1996, 1997; Booysen, 2003, 2001; Cock & Bernstein, 2002; Lessem, 1996; Mbigi & Maree, 1995).

South African society has benefited from a remarkable political and legal transformation towards creating an equitable society free from all forms of discrimination. Nation-building projects that aim to build a “normal” multicultural society with our rich diversity are well underway. On the ground, however, South African society is a long way from reflecting this, as deep social divisions persist within the context of a region grappling with conflict, political upheaval and poverty. The diversity of the population remains largely untapped as a resource, and more often than not is (regarded as) a source of difficulty (Ansell, 2001; Franchi, 2003; Grunebaum & Robins, 2001; Makgoba, 1998; Steyn, 2003; Zegeye, 2001).

Widespread reform has taken place in the labour sector since 1994. The government has introduced new legislation which affects labour relations, basic conditions of employment and employment equity, thus providing the basis for far-reaching changes in South African employment practices. The Commission for Conciliation Mediation and Arbitration and the Labour Court, as well as other structures set up to monitor labour standards, provide the means for unfair labour practices to be challenged and rectified. A significant piece of legislation which has changed the labour landscape in South Africa is the Employment Equity Act, No 55 of 1998. This requires every employer to promote equal opportunity in the workplace by eliminating unfair discrimination from any employment policy or practice and to demonstrate progress in diversifying the workplace in such a way that previously excluded groups are fully represented and promoted.

Some organisations are employing consultants or setting up internal departments to deal with management and organisational issues that have arisen with the challenges of new legislation, but there are considerable differences in the ways in which they deal with changes in staff profiles and cope with the challenges of a diverse workforce. Given that there is no regulatory framework, the people employed to undertake diversity training do not always have real knowledge of the deep-seated issues at stake, and their work can be superficial and ill-advised. In the absence of any “quality assurance” for this work, it is safe to say that the diversity/ equity/ transformation training being provided in South African organisations varies considerably in quality and approach. At the time of this study’s commencement, little research had been conducted to show how successful these programmes and interventions are, or how different approaches work for different

organisations and different problem areas.¹ To date, this is the only research to do so in any systematic and comprehensive way across a number of interventions, organisations, sectors and areas.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

There are many types of interventions that could be classified as dealing with diversity: those based on race, gender, human rights, employment equity, disability, affirmative action (AA), organisational change, organisational transformation, leadership, etc. “Diversity” therefore embraces various types of interventions that aim to change existing social relations in organisations and institutions.

The DEISA programme locates itself within a paradigm that can best be called “critical diversity theory” (Lorbiecki and Jack, 2000). This approach to diversity focuses on multiple axes of difference where power dynamics operate to create the centres and margins of gender, race, ability, sexual orientation, age, etc., as well as their varying intersections. Such an orientation entails a radical look at the constructions of difference which underpin institutional culture and interpersonal interactions, and moves beyond merely tolerating – or assimilating – differences into dominant practices, which is the case for some approaches to diversity. As such, interventions are crucially linked to power dynamics within organisations, but vary considerably in the extent to which they address inequities and contribute to the perpetuation and/or transformation of the status quo.

The strength of this position is that it does not present itself as value-free (which no research ever is), but rather declares its social agenda up front. In brief, this particular stance towards diversity:

- departs from a profound commitment to the values of democracy, social justice, equity and empowerment;
- recognises that the incorporation of people that have been marginalised should not involve a process of assimilation but a transformation of the cultural milieu in order to bring about new social meanings and representations;
- rejects essentialised notions of identity, naturalised notions of race, gender, etc., and discourses which reify homogeneity;

¹ A Nexus database search confirmed that most of the studies undertaken on issues of diversity had focused on organisations that are undergoing transformation. Some isolated studies had been undertaken, mostly as graduate theses, which had focused on the success of interventions at specific institutions, or organisations. Nexus database search: starlog488.temp.1.html

- stresses that identity and difference are constructed within specific historical, cultural and power relations (Giroux, 1997; Goldberg, 1994).

By these criteria, critical diversity interventions should be recognised by their effectiveness in preparing the ground for transformative processes of increasingly democratic and equitable modes of organisation (Adams et al., 1997; Brah, 1992; Deetz, 1992; Delgado & Stefancic, 1997; Giroux, 1997a; Zack, Shrager & Sartwell, 1998). The critical approach provides a distinction between “management of difference” which encourages window-dressing, and that which aims at profound cultural change or “deep transformation”. We see this as the difference between changing the masks, or changing the deep structure and values (Bonnett, 2000; Essed, 1993, 2002; Giroux, 1997b; Ismail, 2002; Kincheloe et al. 1998; Mandaza, 1999).

4. AIMS OF THE STUDY

This study does not address the debates on the value of diversity for “business case” or for the “bottom line” of an organisation, or indeed provide any justification or rationalisation for the diversification of organisations. It merely seeks to understand more of what is being done in the name of diversity interventions, and how these would “square” with a critical diversity approach.

5. METHODOLOGY

The methodology was designed collaboratively by the research-team members and a group of interested stakeholders in a series of workshops. The project consisted of two main forms of data collection. First, we conducted a nationwide survey of diversity practitioners and their practices, through the administration of an in-depth questionnaire. Second, we conducted 12 comprehensive case studies in organisations across the country.

The questionnaires and case studies were analysed separately. The questionnaire and case-study methodologies will be presented in turn.

5.1. Diversity practitioner questionnaire and database

In-depth, self-completing questionnaires were emailed to over 500 diversity practitioners across South Africa. The names and details of these practitioners were gathered from various sources,

including: the Services SETA consultants list, The Skills Portal (www.skillsportal.co.za), the Ananzi consultant list (www.ananzi.co.za) and iNCUDISA and SBL's associate networks. This desktop study produced an extensive database of diversity practitioners – including contact details, areas of specialisation and services offered – which is available to the public online at <http://incudisa.uct.ac.za>.

The questionnaires were designed to investigate the types, orientation and approaches of diversity interventions being offered. The full questionnaire consisted of 37 questions divided into the following three sections:

1. *Definitions and framework for practices:* This section asked practitioners how they understood terminologies common in organisational transformation work, including “diversity” and “equity”.
2. *Types of interventions:* Here, practitioners were asked about the type of interventions they conduct. We also asked about their perceptions on what interventions they considered effective and why they considered them to be effective.
3. *Training-group profiles:* In this section, practitioners were asked for demographic information on the organisations and groups that they work with. We also asked for the practitioners' demographic information.

A total of 43 completed questionnaires were returned to the research office. Although this seems like a low response rate, the depth and quality of data allowed for extensive qualitative analysis.

5.2. Case studies on diversity interventions

Case studies were conducted by diversity studies MPhil and MBA students, under the supervision of senior researchers, in organisational settings at geographically diverse regions. The students underwent training in critical diversity theory and the methodologies they would need to employ. They were given a general template for the final report in order to enhance the comparability of the results. The final studies were also submitted as the formal research component of the students' degrees.

At each site, the organisation was invited to identify what they regarded as the diversity intervention. The study then attempted to assess the degree to which the named intervention had made an impact on the organisation. This “impact” was not considered in terms of “bottom line”, but in terms of the differences. that were discernible in:

1. demographics;

2. policies; and
3. the extent to which the members of the organisation felt a palpable change in the organisation's understanding of their differences.

Individual studies were designed along the lines of classic case-study methodology, i.e. an attempt was made to obtain a 360° understanding of how the intervention had affected the organisation. The effects were assessed at every node of the organisation. Both tangible factors like policy and structures, and intangible factors like stakeholder experiences and organisational culture were assessed. Researchers spent time on site collecting data which included documentation, interview and focus-group material, and observational material. *Figure 1* is a diagrammatic representation of this process.

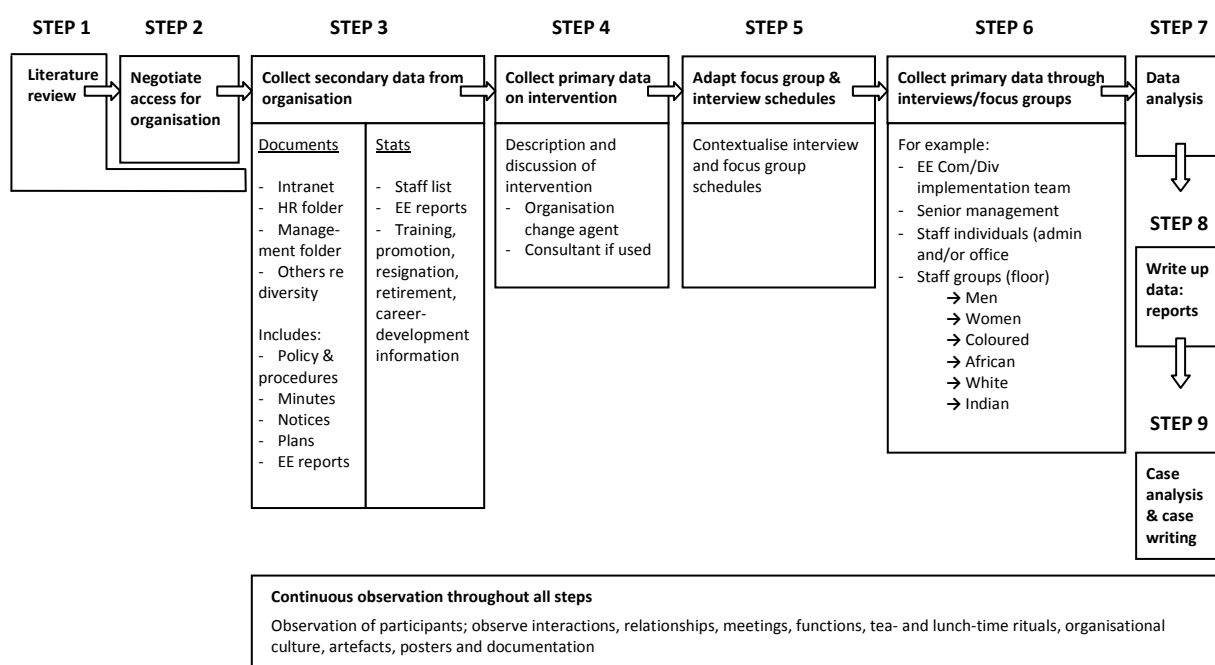


Figure 1: DEISA case study methodology

All these materials were then analysed and reported on under the following headings: Workforce profile; Policy (including vision and mission); Stakeholder experiences; Organisational culture.

Twelve case studies of organisations were undertaken, mostly in the two major hubs of the South African economy: Gauteng and Cape Town. Two studies were in other regions of the country: Mpumalanga and North West Province. For the purposes of this report, the case studies are discussed according to whether they fell under the private or public sector, using a generic naming process in order to ensure anonymity (except where we were explicitly asked by the organisation to make their identity known). The case studies that fell under the private sector were: Small Food-

Production Company (SFPC); Small Clothing Manufacturer (SCM); Retail Company (RC); Financial-Services company (FSC); Large Industrial Company (LIC); Large South African Manufacturer (LSAM); and Commercial Organisation (CO). The public-sector/ state environments were: state-owned Financial Institution (FI); Local-Government Department (LGD); Institute for Higher Learning (IHL); South African Police Service station (SAPS); and a large, state-owned commercialised resources enterprise (Sekupu).

6. QUESTIONNAIRE ANALYSIS

Given that the questionnaires are so comprehensive, they provide numerous opportunities and angles for ongoing analyses. The most fruitful analysis thus far has been of the way in which practitioners define “diversity” in their practice.

6.1. Aligning the “Rubik” cube: Conceptualising transformative diversity practice

The findings of this analysis were published in Kelly, C., Wale, K., Soudien, C. and Steyn, M. (2007) “Aligning the Diversity ‘Rubik’ Cube: Conceptualising transformative practice”, in *South African Journal of Labour Relations*, 31 (2), 10-32. The following is a summary of the article:

The purpose of the analysis was to critically interrogate the extent to which diversity practitioners’ definitions of diversity create the potential for deep transformation. Employing critical management theory and discursive analysis we identified three dimensions to the definitions: Categories of Difference, Engagement of Difference and Site of Change. Each of these was represented as one dimension of the diversity “Rubik” cube. Each dimension was described individually and then the interaction between them was examined. At each point the potential for deep transformation was examined. In most cases the potential for deep transformation offered by the Category of Difference was closed down by the Engagement with Difference. This interaction represents the dominant paradigms for thinking through diversity in management studies. We suggest that there is only one alignment of the dimensions that provides for deep transformative practice, and we offer the diversity “Rubik” cube as a model for management, practitioners and academics to identify it. *Figure 2* illustrates this alignment.

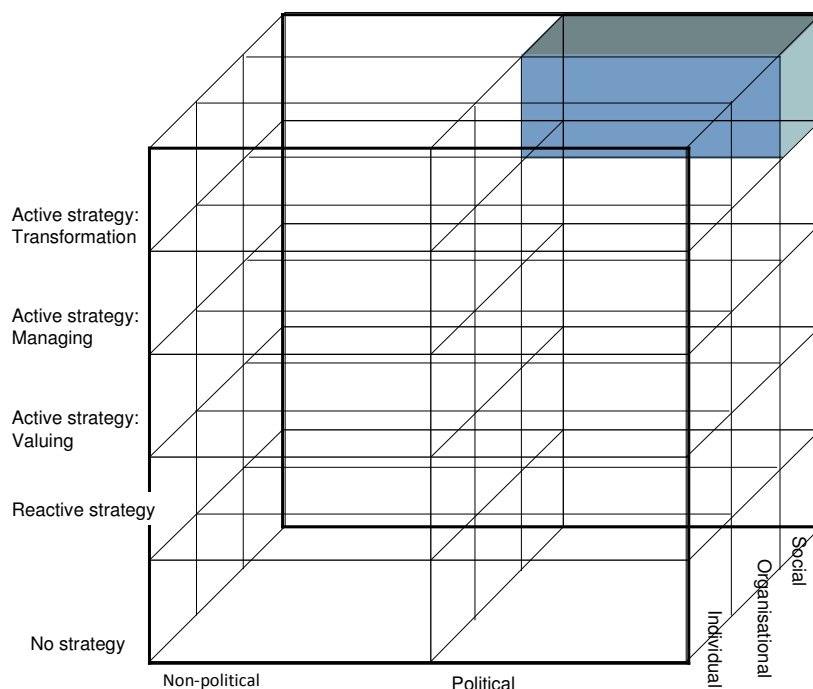


Figure 2: The diversity “Rubik” cube aligned

7. CASE-STUDY ANALYSIS

Each organisation was analysed individually by the Masters students – these individual case studies are available from iNCUDISA on request. Once all the students had completed their individual studies, the case studies were analysed for general trends by the research team. This report presents:

1. an overview of policy frameworks driving diversity initiatives in each case;
2. a description of, and critical commentary (including strengths and weaknesses) on the intervention in each case; and
3. an analysis of general themes emerging across the cases.

7.1. Overview of policy frameworks driving diversity initiatives

The vision and mission of an organisation represents its overarching philosophy and will therefore be the defining framework in policy formation. They make explicit the shared aspirations of the organisation and generate the values which drive all activities in that organisation. Organisational policy is a means of putting these values into operation. Thus, it was useful to examine the way in which diversity featured in the aspirations and values of the organisations, *and* the extent to which these were operationalised and supported in policy and structures.

Each organisation will be described in turn. The questions asked of organisations in examining policies are represented in the following diagram, *Figure 3*:

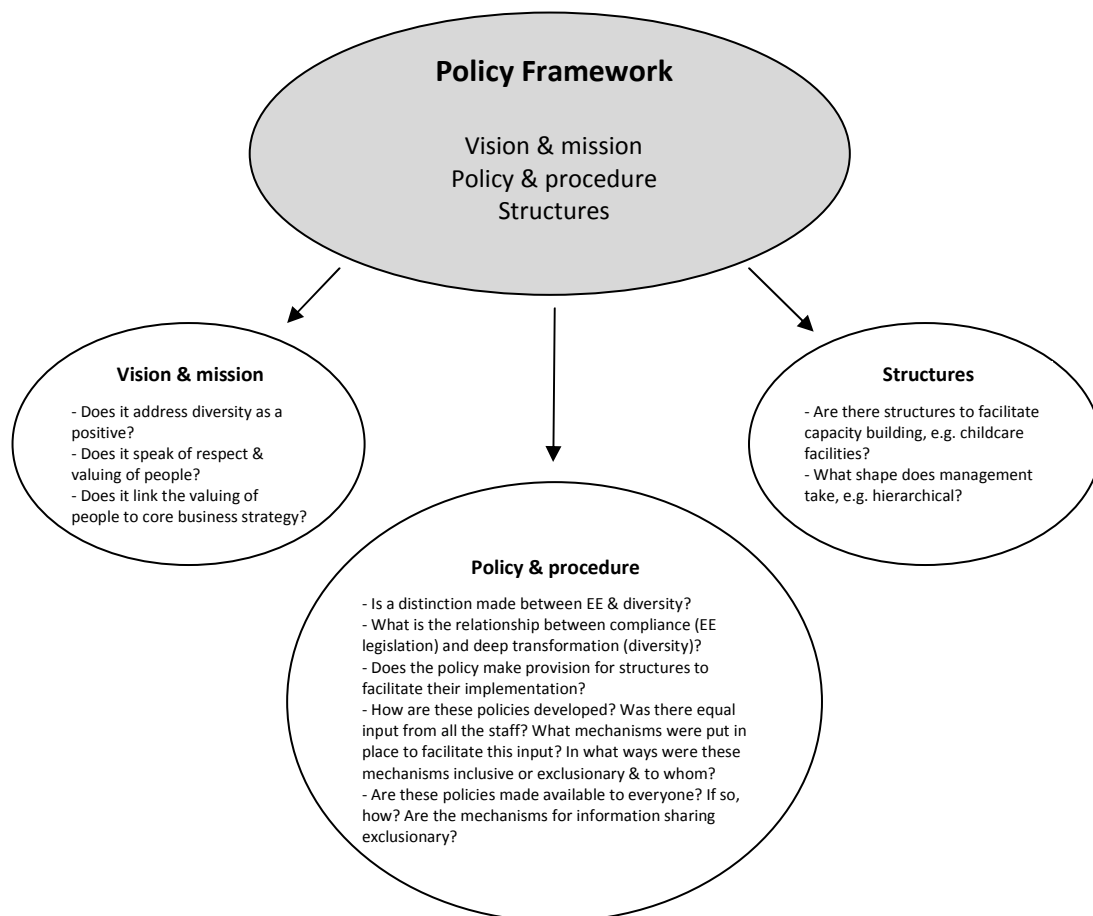


Figure 3: Vision, mission and policy questions

7.1.1. Vision, mission and policy – Private organisations

(a) The Cape Town branch of **Financial Services Company (FSC)** had an employment equity (EE) policy which emphasised “an organisational culture which values diversity”. Management perceived “diversity initiatives” as being necessitated by the business imperatives brought by a shifting market. However, most of the company’s official documents dealt with EE rather than diversity.

The business case was made for EE in that it was defined as a tool to draw to the company people representative of all sectors of society, which would thus broaden its skills base. EE meant the company would be open to different people and so could appreciate what such people could offer. Thus, it was seen as more than just meeting the legal requirements of the EE Act.

The company also had a code of practice against racial harassment and unfair discrimination, policies to prevent discrimination on the basis of language difference, and HIV/Aids and EE guidelines for people with disabilities.

(b) **Small Clothing Manufacturer (SCM)**, based in Cape Town, also focused on EE and not diversity per se. The company's five-year EE plan and statement of commitment to EE fulfilled the minimum requirements of the EE Act. The plan included a retention policy and skills development training for black staff, which manifested in skills-development workshops and infrequent HIV/Aids-awareness workshops.

The EE policy was echoed in the mission statement which was prominently displayed at the level of public interface, i.e. the reception of the building, and nowhere else.

(c) At the Cape Town branch of **Retail Company (RC)**, an HIV/Aids peer-educator programme was identified as the diversity intervention. In addition, the human resources policy committed the company to: being supportive and non-discriminatory in cases where employees had contracted HIV; providing conditions for confidential disclosure of status; and making multivitamins available to people with HIV. Apart from mentioning the conditions for confidential disclosure, the peer-education programme was not acknowledged in the human resources policy document, or the vision and mission. Diversity as a broader concern was not addressed in any policy documents.

(d) **Small Food-Production Company (SFPC)** was also based in Cape Town. The vision and mission directly intended to "embrace diversity", but no policy (outside of EE initiatives) existed to show *how* this would be done.

The organisation had in place the basic requirements of the EE Act. According to the EE Plan, "The company's strategic objectives were taken into account in the development of the workplace-skills plan and were to be the basis for the full EE plan". The broad objective of the plan was to "balance the racial and gender mix across the levels" but it was not clear how this was strategically advantageous. A consultative process was followed in the implementation of the EE plan (through workshops with staff) and a management statement of intent was signed and displayed on notice boards.

(e) **Large Industrial Company (LIC)** had reviewed all policies and procedures to bring them in line with the EE Act and had appointed a black economic empowerment (BEE) manager in accordance with the Broad-based Black Empowerment Act of 2003. A fast-track development

programme for previously disadvantaged persons and an AA recruitment and retention policy had been put in place. There were no explicit policy documents addressing diversity.

(f) **Large South African Manufacturer (LSAM)** departed from the pattern with lengthy policy commitments to promoting diversity and inclusiveness. Firstly, the company's list of values includes "valu[ing] and encourag[ing] diversity". Secondly, the company had national strategic guiding principles which each regional subsidiary used to set its strategic objectives. One of these was:

Employee diversity: [LSAM] companies understand and respect the wide range of human diversity in which they operate and encourage inclusiveness with regard to human resource practices, irrespective of (among others) nationality, race, gender and physical disabilities. The group is committed to an active equal-opportunities policy from recruitment and selection, through training and development, appraisal and promotion to retirement. In Southern Africa, there is a special focus on achieving demographic balance across management grades. Within the constraints of local law it is our policy to ensure that everyone is treated equally, regardless of gender, colour, national origin, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, religion or trade union affiliation.

The company also had a BEE strategy devised by the board of directors in South Africa. Implementation of the BEE policy was ensured by linking the strategy to bonuses paid to managers.

(g) Like LSAM, **Commercial Organisation (CO)** presented a comprehensive engagement with diversity at strategic-business level. After a workshop conducted by a consultant with senior management, the managers released a document entitled "Towards a business case for diversity in [CO]" in which they argued that:

the effective management of diversity would help secure our future by: taking advantage of the widest pool of talent available; ensuring the productivity of this talent; improving staff loyalty, morale and retention; giving a multiplicity of perspectives; ensuring a productive, efficient organisation; and finding new market opportunities, particularly to meet our regional strategy.

The following steps were decided upon:

definition and clear communication of the business case for diversity in CO; development of a monitoring and performance-management system for diversity management; the development and approval of departmental diversity action plans; the development and agreement of individual action plans; and the monitoring and performance management of

departmental and individual action plans to create a sustainable and improved service delivery capability.

7.1.2. Vision, mission and policy – Public organisations

(h) State-owned **Financial Institution (FI)** had an EE plan formulated in accordance with the EE Act. The focus was very much on meeting quotas and the goals were set to change staff profiles to 50% black and 33% female. The organisation had also made the link between a “happier” workforce and improved productivity, but there was no explicit engagement with diversity as a strategic imperative.

(i) **Local Government Department (LGD)** was in the throes of major restructuring and downsizing because of the post-1994 merger of local councils. This included reassignment of employees to new divisions with a new organogram and new management structure. The realisation that not all divisions were applying AA and EE policies led to a management decision that employees had to be sensitised about diversity.

In a variation on the business case for diversity, the local government division attached importance to reflecting and celebrating diversity in order to provide a good service to a diverse clientele, the residents of a major city. This would also enhance the image of the organisation to its community, it was argued.

(j) At a large, state-owned **commercialised-resources enterprise (Sekupu)**, diversity was seen as a business imperative for attaining competitive advantage and was therefore integrated into the core business strategy. The mission stated that the company aspired to having teams of people from diverse backgrounds, skills and needs who grew to their full potential, and that development and empowerment would happen with a view to meeting “agreed business objectives”.

The EE policy stated that a diverse workforce was a competitive advantage in a multicultural and diverse market place. The EE plan dated from 1998 but did not have any strategies attached to it. The company committed itself to implementing AA until “diversity and equal opportunity is a reality”. The EE plan was about achieving numerical targets; promoting an inclusive culture; having open communication; recruiting widely; training members of designated groups to enable promotion; treating “all sexes” fairly; retaining members of designated groups; and addressing barriers. Thus, the focus of Sekupu’s engagement was on EE numerical targets and creating an atmosphere where everyone could feel “at home”.

(k) The core values at a particular faculty at **Institute for Higher Learning (IHL)** were: “equity” and “unity in diversity”, along with professionalism and excellence. An EE plan identified diversity as a source of strength and a powerful key to success. The focus was on people (staff and students) as a strategic resource to achieve its strategic goals, and the EE plan referred to diversity in the following way: “IHL values the richness and contributions of all its diverse body of staff and students.”

Managing diversity had the following benefits, according to the EE plan: achieving strategy; national and international academic acceptance; increasing government support; favourable publicity; attraction and retention of internationally recognised academic staff; meeting demographic targets; attracting high-calibre learners; and attracting donors, sponsorships and other stakeholders.

IHL’s institutional operating plan included staff-development opportunities to achieve racial and gender equity in line with demographics of the country so that IHL could change its “cultural dimension”. It contained an HR management strategy which was geared at EE.

It also committed itself to: achieving equity targets, including through recruitment; meeting racial and gender ratios of 40%; promoting the EE Act; implementing an EE strategy to achieve targets; having a mentorship programme; building black leadership; and developing staff to achieve the EE targets for race and gender. It aimed to change “the culture-bearing principles” and address the organisational culture as manifested in “various cultural dimensions: communication; HR management; leadership; customer focus; participation; decision-making; conflict management; fun; organisational-goal integration; and innovation”.

(l) At **South African Police Service** station (**SAPS**) it was revealed that the national organisation was well organised in terms of policy. The following policies were discussed and all link directly to diversity management: Language policy (under construction at the time of the study); Training and Development policy (2003); SAPS HIV/Aids policy (2003); EE and Elimination of Unfair Discrimination policy (2001); Policy on Sexual Harassment (1998); and the Grootland area EE plan (2005-2006).

The instruction to conduct diversity workshops in Grootland was given by the area director to the HR manager for the area. As stated in the Grootland area EE plan (2005-2006), the aim of the workshops was to “sensitise” members. At the time this was the only area in South Africa where the SAPS were conducting diversity training.

Most of the organisational structures and procedures seemed to support diversity, however there was no engagement of diversity as a strategic imperative.

7.2. Description of the diversity interventions

In the following section, the interventions identified at each of the organisations are described and critically discussed. As part of the research design, the intervention was identified by the organisation itself: this provided an indication of what was regarded as the diversity interventions by both the practitioners and the organisations.

The questions researchers asked when directly considering the interventions are seen in *Figure 4*:

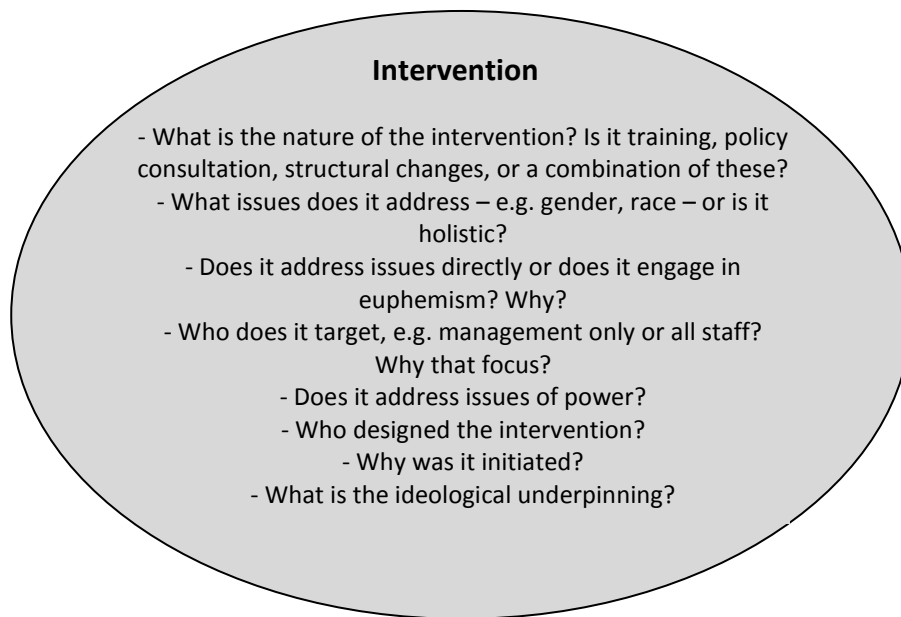


Figure 4: Intervention questions

7.2.1 Interventions – Private organisations

(a) Financial Services Company (FSC)

The main diversity intervention was a training session which management decided should be limited to: helping employees understand what diversity was and why it should be valued; addressing ignorance about culture; and “dealing” with stereotypes.

The training was hampered by being only four hours long, as well as by the fact that not all employees were invited to participate, especially those at lower levels. The manager who initiated the diversity training was moved to another unit and there was no commitment from the rest of management to provide leadership and take the diversity intervention beyond the training. The distribution of a diversity report was hampered because managers did not want to take responsibility for it.

Other diversity interventions were also identified at the company: discussions on diversity at management conferences; diversity days where employees could dress up according to different cultures, including their own; “cook days” where “employees would bring food from their respective cultures”; team building; and cultural debates. Exit interviews were mentioned as an intervention to determine reasons for leaving. Black employees were sent on accelerated development and management courses.

Respondents regarded the EE Act as the most significant factor in these “diversity interventions” and regarded it as a management responsibility emanating from legal EE requirements. According to respondents, the EE Act was driving change, with respondents saying it had created a sense of urgency to address discrimination and to target designated groups for recruitment and training. Respondents were unsure about how management’s implementation of the intervention was being monitored. The company’s EE committee’s role was mostly to deal with assessment, feedback to staff, staff’s EE concerns, progress made with recruitments, promotions and exits, and barrier analysis.

(b) Small Clothing Manufacturer (SCM)

The diversity intervention was a half-day training session for the company’s EE committee members. Exercises were done focusing either on the group or individuals. The idea was that the training should have a ripple effect through the organisation and encourage improved handling of diversity among staff. The exercises were aimed at confronting stereotypes and prejudices. It was also aimed at sensitising people to the fact that unfair discrimination limited an employee’s ability to contribute to the organisation.

The success of the intervention was undermined by: the intervention being limited to EE committee members; the limited time allotted (one afternoon); and the fact that other employees were dependent on EE committee members disseminating what was learnt, a task of which there was little evidence. Furthermore, the sensitisation material avoided issues of power and struggle in changing attitudes and rather focused on individuals being made aware of their own prejudices. While the information alerted people to the injustices wrought by prejudice, no space was dedicated to positive interventions to build relationships. Two videos were shown of which one was unfamiliar as it dealt with workplace efficiency in an American situation, and the other dealt with two male managers – black and white – while the majority of the people at this company were coloured, female and not working in management.

The EE committee members showed diverse responses to the intervention: some thought it broadened their horizons while others thought it was common sense or could not recall it.

Noticeably, the chairperson of the committee – a white male financial director – could not remember the intervention. This is ironic, given that the financial director was partly appointed to show management's commitment. A coloured male member felt he did not have as much to learn as the white people did. Thus, the intervention ran up against individual attitudes which in all probability blocked further constructive dissemination of what was learnt. Respondents in the focus group who were not members of the EE committee did not know about the diversity intervention, which shows there was little or no trickle-down effect.

(c) Retail Company (RC)

The diversity intervention at RC was an HIV/Aids peer-education programme (PEP) based on five pillars: information, awareness, assistance, health services and confidentiality. Peer educators were assigned at every branch. Peer educators were tasked with referring employees for consultations with regional managers (as they were not trained to provide consultations themselves) and raising awareness with poster campaigns, workshops and general interactions. Provincial directors were assigned to train and support peer educators and to develop the peer-education programme.

The results of the PEP were varied. Some HIV-positive staff were satisfied with the support, having been visited at home and given food. PEP was seen as particularly helpful to those with HIV who were fearful of living openly with the disease. Some felt it was a good start and had to be built upon. On the other hand, one staff member with HIV received only multivitamins and no other support. She was interested in becoming a peer educator but was not given the opportunity. Awareness remained low, according to her.

There were a number of problems with implementation. At a pragmatic level, peer educators had to conduct this work above and beyond their own duties as no time was specifically allotted for peer-education activities. As peer educators were not able to devote time to PEP, few activities took place with not even one workshop held on HIV/Aids during 2006. Peer educators felt they were too few in number and were not given enough time or support to fulfil their peer-educating tasks. At this particular site there were only three educators and they met with the regional manager every six months. Not enough time was allocated to meetings in which to develop peer-education initiatives.

At a more theoretical level, PEP was part of the knowledge-attitude-awareness paradigm which posits that behaviour can be changed through knowledge – a programme which does not take cognisance of the complexities of power relations in real-life situations. The objective was to impart knowledge, eliminate discrimination, make people aware of their rights and protect people who may have been exposed. In the process, people should thus be empowered to think critically about power relations and to challenge them. But PEP became a point only for practical support for HIV-positive

people, confidential disclosure and the collection of donations for staff in the final stages of illness. Instead of this, staff wanted more activities, workshops and information about their rights. Stigma was also not addressed in the intervention, and focus-group respondents agreed that it persisted as a major stumbling block to disclosure.

Overall, staff showed a low level of awareness beyond the primary message of HIV/Aids prevention. Most received their information from outside the workplace and not from PEP. The result was a general feeling among staff is that the peer educators were not doing their jobs.

(d) Small Food-Production Company (SFPC)

The EE and training committee (EETC) was put forward by the management as the diversity intervention in this case. The committee's main role was to develop an EE plan, conduct an analysis of barriers, and prepare annual EE reports for the Department of Labour. Its other mandate was skills development. The combination of EE and skills development in one forum was considered by the HR manager to be a useful and strategic marriage. Most discussion time in EETC meetings was spent on recruitment and selection procedures.

Management regarded the EETC's successes as: the development of the recruitment policy based on EE principles; having the buy-in of directors; being a platform to deal with sexual harassment and hate speech, and empowering employees to "recommend" disciplinary action; the integration of organised labour, management and shop floor into one forum; and the employment of disabled persons.

However, respondents outside of management (including EETC members) spoke mostly of the shortcomings of the EETC. These included the EETC: not being assertive enough to have major influence on management decisions; giving inconsistent feedback to constituents/workers; dealing with labour issues, which is the purview of trade unions; operating in an ad hoc and reactive manner; having vague terms of reference; members being unclear about their duties; and meetings being dominated by management, which saw them as forum to communicate "down" to staff and resulting in experiences of silencing. A combination of the above, as well as irregularities and misunderstandings about who was on the EETC, resulted in staff not considering the EETC as serving their interests, but rather those of management.

Furthermore, researchers observed that: its work had not so far resulted in all levels in the company becoming representative; language and illiteracy were not being dealt with in any meaningful way; disciplinary records showed a racially skewed pattern of action; no follow-up plans were ever made on improving aspects such as consultation, awareness of EE, analysis or developing a plan of action.

(e) Large Industrial Company (LIC)

The intervention in this case was a review of all policies and procedures by an HR consultant and the appointment of a BEE manager. The data suggested, however, that these interventions had not brought much change.

Equity targets were met mostly only at shop floor level, when they were met at all. Management profiles remained unchanged. The researcher found that retrenched white male employees were being re-appointed on a temporary or contract basis to camouflage their presence. Overall, there seemed to be a disjuncture between stated policies

There was much distrust, and language remained a bone of contention with complaints about English and Afrikaans being used to exclude black staff. Regarding gender, a respondent stated that there was “a clear imbalance in opportunities”.

(f) Large South African Manufacturer (LSAM)

Two interventions were undertaken at two sites. North Site chose to locate its diversity intervention (called “Finding common ground”) within its business strategy of becoming “globally great” and all business interventions, including diversity, were located within this framework. Although North Site’s HR executive was adamant that the intervention plan was designed to address specific behaviours, it emerged that the intervention design team were not sure which current behaviours were undesirable or indeed which behaviours were desirable. The plan itself was more a statement of intent and philosophy than an action plan. North Site’s goal was to manage diversity through the application of various LSAM people-management strategies, thus ensuring its alignment with LSAM’s overall initiative. But despite the focus on awareness and social interaction, the main activity was the EE project and on deliberately developing equity candidates to ensure representation at all levels.

South Site’s “Diversity for growth” intervention was designed to solve the four key dilemmas that arose from the diagnostic phase: race issues, leadership style, poor understanding of LSAM’s BEE strategy, and perceived unfair recruitment practices. The diagnostic analysis was conducted by the South Site HR team, and was largely informed by insight gained at a diversity workshop conducted by an external diversity consultant who subscribed to the notion that organisational context (including the diversity appreciation climate) is largely shaped by leadership style. Tools for breaking down negative stereotyping as well as assisting leaders to manage their expectancy communication were therefore advocated. Several workshops, programmes and tools were used during the intervention, including: workshops on the consequences of negative stereotyping; establishment of an EE committee; creation of a “people balance sheet”; an integrated

management process; defining a leadership brand; leadership development; and a “best company to work for” programme.

Despite the intention to create deep culture change at both North and South Sites, all participants felt that the intervention had made no change or had had a negative impact. South Site participants were slightly less negative than those from North Site. All participants spoke of lingering racial and gender tensions which had not been sufficiently addressed.

(g) Commercial Organisation (CO)

A number of interrelated diversity interventions were implemented at CO.

First, departmental diversity workshops were conducted to devise departmental action plans which were then presented to the EE forum and senior managers. Forty-two workshops were held and attended by all employees. Managers were helped with developing their plans at these workshops. Progress was then measured on a six-monthly basis. While some respondents regarded the workshops as “window-dressing”, others saw an improvement in (especially racial) relations. Many respondents said that a useful space was created for discussion of differences at work, but some (especially white) respondents found the experience of the workshops was threatening.

Second, an external audit was conducted of the diversity competence of managers. The audit showed that managers at CO had a long way to go to reach workable levels of competence in relation to diversity. Managers were perceived as autocratic and decision-making structures were too hierarchical.

Third, a diversity steering committee was created to monitor the diversity climate.

Finally, there was active integration of diversity into the broader people-development strategy.

7.2.2. Interventions – Public organisations

(h) State-owned Financial Institution (FI)

This organisation had a fulltime diversity manager who reported to the HR manager. A diversity programme was rolled out throughout the organisation. This included a culture-and-skills audit, an HIV/Aids-prevalence study and the appointment of a working group to revisit policies with a view to promoting diversity, removing discrimination and ensuring compliance with the EE Act.

In addition, a departmental equity forum and EE consultative body (EECB) were set up to deal with EE issues in terms of the EE Act. The EECB and trade union were consulted throughout

the implementation of the EE Act's requirements. The EECB represented all levels within the organisation and consulted with management.

In spite of all this, management had not been adequately held accountable for EE: for example, there was no plan for the development and retention of staff, and little progress was made even in relation to EE.

While every staff member had attended a diversity workshop, integration is still low.

(i) **Local Government Department (LGD)**

The intervention presented in this case consisted of compulsory three-day training workshops for all staff. Workshop content included: the concept of diversity (personally and organisationally) and how to manage it in the workplace; EE; gender, including stereotypes in the workplace, the "glass ceiling", sexual harassment and "sensitive language"; and race, including stereotypes, personal stories and exchanges of cultural experiences. The workshops concluded with "action planning", where participants decided on actions to implement what they had learnt in the workshops.

Despite being fairly comprehensive in terms of content, the workshop was criticised by respondents. These criticisms included: the fact that facilitators were not diverse enough (mostly white women); there were not enough facilitators (only six for 24 000 people); the workshop did not allow enough time; the workshop was emotionally "damaging and exhausting"; and there was no follow-up or feedback at organisational level. Senior and middle managers admitted there was a lack of follow-up from management's side.

(j) Large state-owned **Commercialised-Resources Enterprise (Sekupu)**

The EE consultative forum (EECF) and cultural sensitivity training (for management) were identified as the diversity interventions at Sekupu. The organisation had integrated the idea of diversity into its core business strategy, although 24% of respondents did not know about it.

The EECF was elected by employees. It consisted of ten members, including two from management and two from each race and gender across all levels. Monthly meetings were held where "EE/diversity issues" were discussed, including management feedback on EE, EE statistics, employees' issues, governance, resignations and appointments. The minutes were distributed to all "stakeholders". An intranet site was used for communication, which employees also used to make comments. In addition, speakers were arranged to share knowledge on diversity.

Between 1998 and 2000, the forum's function was monitoring. In 2001 it became a consultative forum but the functions were still to advise, monitor, inform, sensitise and act as a sounding board on EE for management. Concern was expressed as to whether the EECF had

“teeth”. Some staff members wanted the power for EECF to intervene in cases where management was resistant to change. Black people were seen as the group most active in the EECF as they were “mostly affected by the perceived injustices”, according to the research.

In 2003 a senior manager was assigned to implement the EE plan. AA and EE policies were assigned to be implemented by MDs of business units. However, many members of the EECF did not know that there were such policy statements.

Management’s ongoing activities aimed at EE were varied. Their role was to identify people from designated groups for training and encourage “previously disadvantaged persons” to have mentors. They had to implement the EE incentive-bonus scheme. They also met quarterly with the EECF to discuss diversity issues, and the EECF chairperson was invited to discuss issues at management meetings. All managers had to attend a one-day diversity workshop entitled “Leadership advantage through diversity”.

Despite all this, problems existed with the retention of black and women staff, and 76% of respondents thought there were problems with EE. A high 88% thought training and development was not being implemented adequately. According to respondents, managers were not trained in understanding and valuing similarities and differences among employees. Other problems included black managers saying that black people were never sent to represent the company while white professionals said blacks were promoted without being equipped.

(k) Institute for Higher Learning (IHL)

The diversity interventions identified at a faculty at IHL were the EE and training committee (EETC), mandatory AA, a “Building black leadership” programme, and skills development and training.

At the time of the study, IHL was at the end of a complicated restructure as it had been one of the tertiary institutions that had undergone a merger. The merger process had been characterised by uncertainty, which was a powerful mitigating factor in the interventions in question.

There were mixed responses to whether IHL valued a diverse workforce. Those that were positive about signs of improvement based their comments on the increase in the number of black people in positions such as management and because they “can see different cultures working together”, while those that saw no signs said the EE plan was not effective or “I see a lot of white people; it doesn’t show me that there is any change”. The researcher observed an absence of signs of social mixing in the tearoom and respondents reported that social invitations stuck to racial lines.

Problems identified by an employee were that the EETC needed more resources to be more effective and that the voluntary nature of diversity training meant that management rarely attended.

According to respondents, all the interventions in question remained at top levels of the institution and did not reach the workforce, which is why they had failed.

(1) South African Police Services station (SAPS)

All staff in the Grootland area of the Western Cape were trained as part of an area equity plan which was rolled out to 4 559 members at 60 stations over a six-month period. The diversity intervention was a half-day workshop aimed at creating sensitivity to SAPS members' different backgrounds. The need for the action came after increasing numbers of Xhosa-speaking staff had applied for transfers or committed suicide after being transferred to the area in order to meet equity targets. The goal was to retain Xhosa-speaking police officers who had been recruited from outside the province and who were finding it hard to adapt to Afrikaans-speaking organisation and public.

SAPS's Employee Assistance Services were called in to conduct training. There was no budget allocated for the workshops, so what was originally a three-day workshop programme was reduced to a two-day programme for management and a one-day programme for other members. In effect, however, the one-day workshops were only three to four hours long. The workshops were run in a haphazard manner and passed without probing power disparities in the organisation. Respondents did not think that the training would result in any changes as they believed that individual staff and management members had to change themselves.

The workshop failed to address obvious and pressing race concerns playing out in the stations. The presence of a white person in a cleaner job at one of the stations "confused" matters along the class/race fault line and facilitators failed to interrogate these attitudes. Some white officers feared displacement due to AA. Coloured and white officers saw the appointment of officers from the Eastern Cape as a threat to their own positions. Further to this, the workshops paid little attention to the issue of gender, despite the researcher being assured of its importance being "second only to race".

According to one respondent, any change in attitude could be attributed to other sources, especially national discourse. This is summed up in the quotation: "People are changing 'cause they feel they have to change; because [the] country says they have to change."

8. COMPARISON ACROSS STUDIES – EMERGING THEMES

Although each case study presented particular contexts, issues and challenges, there were themes that emerged across all 12 cases. Discussion of these themes constitutes the major findings of this project and the balance of this report.

Overall, eight key themes were identified. The findings of such a comprehensive study are inevitably complex, but the following themes represent some of the most salient and important observed trends and emerging issues:

1. Inattention to contextual realities
2. Reduction of diversity to EE
3. Neglect of “other” diversities
4. Quality of interventions
5. Environmental challenges and hurdles
6. Management resistance
7. The predominance of racism
8. Climates of fear and suspicion

8.1. Inattention to contextual realities

Due to the work pressures, lay-offs, retrenchments, and the subsequent non-appointment of staff to replace these employees, managers have little or no time available to manage diversity. (A respondent at LIC)

The above point is a crucial one, which raises many key issues facing South African organisations in their transformation processes. How, indeed, does one “manage diversity” when one’s organisation has lost 50 000 staff over the last five years (LIC)? How does one meet EE targets when you are retrenching more staff than you are hiring (LIC)? How does one deal with major organisational upheavals like mergers (IHL and LGD) and changes in political leadership (LGD)? These are fundamental questions that diversity practitioners should be asking themselves in order to provide meaningful and effective services. In the cases we investigated, most were not.

8.1.1. Organisations in social / political / geographical / historical context

In the cases where interventions were informed by a strong business case (LSAM, CO and LGD), they were more likely to engage meaningfully with major foundational concerns. The diversity work at LGD was in part an attempt by organisational leadership to integrate what were originally separate and – given South Africa’s persistent apartheid geography – differently racialised municipal areas. At LSAM, the organisation’s multinational reach was a key driver of its diversity plan. In each case, because the intervention was conceived as a response to a core business need, it was more aligned with what core business was having to deal with, and therefore more immediately relevant. Having said that, the existence of a business case that was more contextually relevant to the organisation did not guarantee a successful intervention. A number of factors seem to intersect in determining this. There is a further discussion about the “business case” later.

Organisational contexts do not just consist of what they are experiencing now; these experiences are located in a particular social and political history and, as a result, particular ideological paradigms. That history is as important to the organisation’s context as the present retrenchments, mergers, etc. There are three organisations that illustrate this well: IHL, LIC and SAPS.

IHL is a tertiary-education institution. Higher-education institutions face particular issues regarding organisational culture: they are generally grounded in particular “legitimate” traditions of knowledge construction which are heavily racialised, and are by their very nature elitist and hierarchical. The merger between historically black and historically white institutions occurs in this ideological context and it is in this context that diversity must be engaged.

For LIC, the transformation from apartheid parastatal to privately owned multinational is deeply significant: large industrial parastatals were one of the major instruments of the apartheid government to generate jobs for poor whites. Thus, these organisations became populated by a particular group of people inside of a particular entitlement. Many of these employees are still there, in senior-management positions. Contrast the organisational culture of an apartheid parastatal with, for example, that of a competitive, globally responsive, multinational company based in India! Further to this, industrial work (in general) is highly gendered: factories, mines and construction are not seen to be the appropriate domains women. “New-fangled” notions of gender equality are not going to sit easily in these organisations.

SAPS is similarly located in history. Once the instrument of the apartheid government, this organisation now needs to service the needs of the entire population and is required to do so in the context of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. This requires that the organisation becomes

unrecognisable to its former self, as do the people who remain from the previous incarnation. Add to this the hierarchical and patriarchal nature of militaristic/security organisations, and you have a deeply complex context for any diversity intervention.

8.1.2. *We are not the USA!*

What struck the research team about all the organisations we investigated was the extent to which they confirmed much of the diversity literature from the United States. We saw the same dynamics that US-based researchers report on: the same issues, the same resistances, the same demographic breakdowns. Given that organisations in the US operate in a context where the population is (give or take) 80% white and 20% “other”, and South African organisations operate in a context where these figures are roughly reversed, seeing the same dynamics was profoundly significant. This suggested to us the extent to which South African organisations remain almost impenetrable to socio-political and historical contexts, reproducing particular racialised arrangements so much so that these are almost accepted as “natural” (ie, this is what organisations *should* look like and these are the diversity issues we *should* face). It also suggested that local diversity practitioners operating within the US model may themselves be so embedded in these “naturalised” notions of the characteristics of organisations that they may be engaging with limited notions of what transformation in South African organisations looks like. This point is very clearly explored in the second theme.

8.2. Reduction of diversity to EE

Interviewer: *What diversity interventions do you have at SFPC?*

SFPC respondent: *We have the EE committee!*

One of the most important findings of the investigation thus far is that diversity is largely being understood in terms of employment equity. Of the 12 cases we conducted, *all* included EE as a dimension of transformation work in the organisation. This is understandable as there is an imperative from government through the EE Act for organisations to change their demographic profiles. What was surprising (and disturbing), however, is that for many of the organisations investigated, this was the extent of their engagement with transformation: getting the numbers right because government says so.

The reductionist approach was mostly starkly illustrated in two cases where EE committees were put forward as *the only* diversity intervention: SFPC's EE committee, and LIC's BEE manager and EE audit. EE committees are recommended by the EE Act as a means to implement EE plans and conduct EE reporting.

Having said this, even this basic level of transformation was not being successfully managed in some organisations (SFPC, LIC, FSC and SCM). At SFPC, a vote of no confidence had been passed against the EETC as staff considered it dysfunctional and simply serving the interests of management. At LIC, one respondent reported an improvement in representivity but expressed doubt over the choice of EE candidates and the extent to which they actually have any real power:

I see more disadvantaged groups growing. I am yet to see them controlling key areas. I feel those that are in key areas are not vocal enough to ensure that their being there brings the fruits of diversity that everybody is talking about. (LIC)

As a result there is very little trust of the processes, and EE processes are seen to be circumvented and of little use as “all the positions are earmarked for whites” anyway:

... when white employees complain about not getting a management post due to restructuring or rationalisation or for whatever reason and then stops complaining all of a sudden and starts working harder ... shortly thereafter he buys a new car ... this must mean he got an increase, but if we blacks complain, we get told nothing can be done and that we should just continue applying for vacancies. I know this is not going to happen because all the posts have been earmarked for whites ... (LIC)

There were, however, attempts by some organisations to engage diversity at a level beyond EE, to greater and lesser degrees. All of this engagement was framed in terms of the “business case” for diversity. Yet in most of these cases, even though this argument was made, emphasis remained on “getting the numbers right” (IHL, Sekupu, FSC, LGD and SFPC).

IHL is one example of rhetorical commitment that translated into change in accordance with EE and little else, despite claims to the strategic imperative of diversity in their core business. The EE plan claimed that “diversity is far more than the race and gender profile of [IHL]” but the emphasis remained on EE. One of the effects of this was an increase of black people in certain positions such as management, but without an enabling environment having been created. A black respondent reported: “Sometimes I am seen as a black face and not as an academic and because of that, we can use her.” Another said: “I would like people to know that I have the content and character to do the job – not because I am black.” Another said:

I will give you an example of an assessment workshop that I have attended, when they wanted input and I give my input it was OK, and then somebody else (white) says the very same thing I have said then all of a sudden it was a brilliant idea – that make me feel that I'm not expected to say anything of value so I kept quiet after that.

Respondents reported instances of differential treatment, racism and pressure to prove their competence. From white respondents “reverse racism” was complained about.

Respondents in the IHL study identified problems such as distant or absent management, lack of decisiveness, along with insecurity, “passive and active racism” and contributions not being valued (“I feel insecure and that I’ve being look down upon, I’ve been treated if I don’t know anything”). Black respondents wanted white people in general to know that they: were under pressure to prove themselves; felt isolated; were human; were hard-working and worried about quality; needed support; and were sensitive to phrases such as “you people”. White respondents wanted black people in general to know they: were unintentionally resistant to change; were individualistic; had no hidden agendas, did not want to disadvantage others; were knowledgeable and focussed on quality; were private, academically oriented and not superior; and wished to help other groups. Whites wanted black colleagues to know that: “rules are rules”, “others” don’t appreciate the whites’ contribution and whites valued diversity but also independence. Blacks wanted white colleagues to know that they thought whites are unwilling to change. Thus, the IHL faculty dean had to admit that the impact of the interventions had been limited, while expressing uncertainty about the functioning and impact of the EE committee. What was clear in this case study was that merely getting black people and women “in” did not automatically generate a climate where diversity was valued and effectively leveraged.

LGD presented another example in which diversity and EE were deemed synonymous in the minds of management and staff to the point of being perceived as the same issue: diversity “fits with the aims and objectives in terms of EE”, a coloured, female middle manager told the researcher. Similarly, “... the corporate HR strategy [is] to achieve equity in the workplace”, according to a black male senior manager. Staff seemed under the same impression; as a black male staff member said, “... we have EE to recognise diversity”. A diversity-training programme was instituted in which an in-depth understanding of EE was equated with a culture on valuing diversity. The vision and mission was focused on addressing EE, the recruitment policy was aimed at recruiting “more diverse staff by prioritising previously disadvantaged groups” and the language policy aimed for the inclusion of all three regional languages (Afrikaans, English and Xhosa). The success of diversity management was measured, amongst others, in terms of EE (i.e., representivity statistics), how members of staff dealt with the public, responses from peers in the workplace and

an undefined performance measurement for managers. All of the above indicated a commitment towards transformation, but this transformation was narrowly defined in terms of EE, which was not commensurate with the organisation's aims of reflecting and celebrating diversity in order to provide a good service to a diverse clientele.

Only two organisations did not regard EE as synonymous with diversity management: LSAM and CO. In both cases, the business case and strategic imperative for diversity were heavily emphasised to the point where concerns about diversity could infiltrate core business activities. Both organisations were characterised by high levels of activity across organisational structures, backed up by documented commitments to diversity – which reflect a multidimensional understanding of the issue. At CO, employees' improvement of their diversity competence would determine career advance in the organisation, managers decided. Among various interventions, 42 workshops with all employees led to diversity becoming an everyday word at the workplace and an issue that everybody could grasp. In the policy documents, there was a clear distinction made between EE and “diversity management”. Diversity management was seen to go further than “getting the numbers right”, to actively leveraging the potential for strategic advantage and competitiveness that a diverse workforce can generate.

The complexity of diversity management was shown by the cases where organisations actually went further to investigate more complex approaches to diversity (LSAM and CO). Even in these most promising instances the interventions had limited positive results. For example, despite LSAM's emphasis on diversity, white males still predominated at management level, leading the researcher to conclude that “the distribution of power is ... skewed away from blacks”. Negative attitudes towards black (so-called EE) appointments prevailed and black respondents reported ongoing experiences of everyday racism:

... there are people that just go out of their way to make sure that you remember that hey, you're really not here because you can do this and we know you're not clever and that you're black to balance the numbers. (LSAM)

One can also add that power was distributed away from women, because all seven of the LSAM manufacturing sites in South Africa were managed by men (of whom five are white). At board level, eight of the nine directors were men (and seven are white). In all, 84% of respondents at LSAM's North Site thought there had been no or negative change since the diversity intervention; at its South Site, 63% felt the same. The primary reason was the slow rate of change while about a quarter of respondents at North Site thought change brought lower standards and inexperience. Similar dynamics and experiences were reported at CO.

8.3. Neglect of “other” diversities

There is some stuff a female cannot do, that a male can do. Like the big hoses, for example. My personal point is that I would rather have males because of the physical work involved and most females cannot cope. I have a woman who is like a “brick and a tikkie” high. What is she going to do as far as physical work? (LSAM)

8.3.1. Gender

In line with the national political mood, gender plays second fiddle to race and in some cases blatant discrimination against female employees continues with impunity. Across all the case studies the hierarchies are explicitly gendered, with women featuring very infrequently in top-management positions. It is also clear, from organisational distributions as well as interview data, that certain professions remain strongly gendered (see above quote). Furthermore, the interview data shows sexist attitudes prevailing unashamedly.

At the SAPS branch, gender lines still determined the kinds of jobs being done by SAPS members. Some 30% of the station’s workforce consisted of women but they were generally excluded from front-line policing positions and concentrated in administration. In cases of pregnancy, front-line police women lost their positions. The officer dealing with disciplinary action made dismissive comments about sexual harassment allegations, which may have been reflective of prevalent attitudes.

Similarly, at SFPC, gender discrimination seemed the order of the day, despite alleged efforts to employ black women at senior level. The researcher observed that black women were the most silent among the workers. A coloured female supervisor pointed out that women must have “strong character”, “prove” themselves and “show” what they can do at the company. Men were perceived to be more easily appointed to permanent positions. There was blatant discrimination on the basis of maternity and pregnancy, with women losing jobs because their positions were filled while they are away; or they were moved to new positions. In one case a woman who was hospitalised during pregnancy had to produce a letter of proof, which she could not do as she was in hospital.

SCM had high numbers of female employees in subordinate ranks and a concentration of male employees in positions of power. Still, a sexual-harassment policy was only developed after a committee was set up in accordance with the EE Act. To exacerbate matters, the (female) HR manager and HR consultant insisted to the researcher that in “the real world” whistling on the factory floor could not be stopped and trying to do so would be futile.

At RC, gender discrimination was not identified as an issue in the HIV/Aids peer-education diversity intervention – despite HIV/Aids being a thoroughly gendered disease, as shown in its disproportionate national prevalence among women (Van Dyk, 2005). Again, as at SCM, the attitude was expressed that nothing could be done about sexual harassment. The following justification was given by a male manager at RC:

[E]very second guy is acting in a sexual harassment manner to other people. “Hey you’ve got lekker bums” and all that. You see, so that will be there always. No matter how you try and control it.

Gender discrimination had become normalised in this context to the detriment of the intervention’s past successes: by disallowing the creation of a safe space for women, such sexism facilitates the transmission of HIV.

At LSAM, respondents identified gender tension as the second most frequently occurring diversity tension after racial tension (17% and 19% respectively). A female shop-floor employee told the researcher:

... in my team I am the only woman there and sometimes when I need help with physical things they say to me “I am not there when you get your pay cheque” and most of them are not willing to help out ... (LSAM)

The attitude was confirmed by a male junior manager: “I have a woman who is like a brick and a ticky high. What is she going to do as far as physical work?” (LSAM)

Male fears at LSAM were expressed in the following way:

Yes, everybody is not happy ... because the wife is bringing now the same salary or even more than your salary. My wife is working and she earns more than me then she says to me I am going to town and I will be late. Now we don’t feel that it is ok for our wives to speak to us like that. Now because of equity my wife can tell you something. Yes the guys are feeling the pain and that is very bad as I told you about those ladies that are working here those ladies are top managers. And maybe these ladies are married and she brings R23 000 from work on her salary monthly and maybe I bring R6 000. Money speaks, so she is the best. (LSAM)

Similarly, at CO a female respondent said older males struggled with receiving orders from women, an issue that was properly addressed at the workshops:

Sometimes some of these males develop an issue because they have to listen to a female manager and in other instances it appears that these males do not always know how to react to these situations where I am the senior to make the decision.

None of the interventions under investigation addressed gender concerns in any meaningful way, not even the HIV/Aids-related intervention, which one might consider obvious. The lack of engagement with gender was reflected in the unapologetic sexism that pervaded all of these organisations. It may be that diversity interventions with a unitary focus on race are not only ignoring gender inequality, but in doing so, actually further entrenching it.

8.3.2. “Other” diversities

What was starkly obvious was the complete non-engagement of other forms of difference and inequality, both in the interventions and in speaking to members of the organisations. Disability featured to an extent (SFPC had recently appointed a disabled receptionist), but this was largely a function of it being a category in EE reporting. In some cases, for example at FSC, there was also limited engagement with culture and, to a lesser extent, religion.

Engagement with homophobia and xenophobia was nowhere to be seen. Given the very real problems South Africa experiences in relation to both of these issues – recent attacks on African immigrants and the murder of lesbians being just the tip of a very large iceberg of violence, intimidation and marginalisation – this silence is particularly disturbing.

The exclusion of these (crucial) axes of diversity may be a function of the EE imperative driving most of these interventions. Most interventions investigated were conducting “diversity” work from within a narrowly legislated directive to transform (in order of importance) racial, gender and disability demographics. As a result, they seem to have become limited to these axes of diversity, thus missing crucial dimensions in the conversation for transformation. This is not to suggest that race is not important and being “overdone”. On the contrary, it remains a crucial conversation for transformation in our organisations and in the country, and as it has not nearly been “dealt with”. It is, however, not the *only* conversation that needs to be had.

8.4. Quality of interventions

We do have the programme but the way it is managed is wrong. It is done very haphazardly; it is left to the employees. (Sekupu)

The case studies exhibited a multitude of approaches to diversity interventions by management and consultants alike: from the multilevel thoroughness of the consultant in the CO and LSAM case studies to the EE committees of SFPC and SCM. In all of these cases, the respondents reported on a number of problematic practices. This section will explore some to the practices which are common to most of the interventions. These are:

1. Haphazard implementation
2. Management dominance of processes
3. Poor facilitation of workshops

8.4.1. Haphazard implementation

The first indication that many interventions were not being systematically applied arose in cases where the researchers found that many staff members did not know about the intervention in question (SFPC, IHL, SCM and FSC). At SFPC, the researcher had to spend much of her time explaining what the EETC was and what it did, especially to factory floor workers:

Interviewer: *Have you heard of the employment equity committee?*

SFPC respondent: *No, not really. Can you tell me about it?*

This was in spite of the HR manager's confidence in communication structures and the assertion that all staff would be able to comment on it. At FSC, the people working in the mailroom had never heard of or participated in any diversity-related activities. At SCM, a senior-management member who was supposed to have been part of the implementation team did not even remember it! These interventions – which were meant to serve the interests of all staff members – were not reaching them, and serious questions arose about the impact they could possibly have had.

A second indication of haphazard implementation, which was true for most organisations surveyed, was that there was no means of monitoring the impact of the interventions in any meaningful way. In some cases, there was no coherent plan for or clear idea of what the intervention was expected to achieve in the first place (outside of achieving equity targets, that is). One member of the EETC at SFPC said:

In the time I've been here, it's only eleven months now, that I have been on the committee, we haven't done specific analysis where statistically we could prove certain things ... And homed in on the problem.

A staff member at IHL suggested that because there was no monitoring of people's attendance of workshops, the training had become "reactive" and a tool for "conflict management":

We have diversity-management training that is on a voluntary basis. It is not part of management's key performance areas to attend training or to ensure that staff is trained. The training is on a voluntary basis and originates from conflict situations, so management sees it as a conflict-management intervention. That conflict is usually along race lines. Training is reactive, not proactive.

Even in the cases featuring the more sophisticated interventions – like at LSAM and CO, where there were plans made and targets set, and so activities took part inside of a larger proactive framework – there were problems with monitoring. At CO, for example, there was a very clear plan, but according to an employee:

We actually have a diversity plan which has been submitted probably two years ago already. I don't, we really, actually have got a specific set of targets although we've got the plan in action, we try to live the plan on a daily basis. So we don't really measure ourselves to say we have achieved a certain few things.

The third indication of the haphazard nature of implementation was the need for follow-up and support structures, especially in the cases where the intervention took the form of workshops. This was of particular concern at LGD. As two LGD senior managers observed:

The limitations is that people are trained but there is no follow up and for me the limitation is the problem.

I think the limitations of the training is from the, that we need to have what we call follow-up session, feedback sessions – you know, where you actually come back and follow up with the people which will then assist them to manage diversity.

The call for more sustained engagement of issues dealt with at workshops was also felt at IHL, where respondents wanted continuous processes with more informal opportunities to discuss differences and learn from each other. In this case there was a follow-up workshop but respondents felt that too much time lapsed between the start of the intervention, completion and follow-through. They suggested that a situation had to be created where group members were dependent on each other in order to facilitate a learning experience and that more depth was required for follow-up activities.

8.4.2. *Management dominance of processes*

SCM was a good example of management dominance of the change process. In SCM, the diversity intervention had little impact. This outcome was not surprising, given the way in which the EE policy was formulated and how the EE committee operated.

The EE committee was formed in 2000 when an HR consultant was assigned to implement the EE Act's requirements. The HR consultant, who visited the company twice a week, was responsible for developing and implementing the EE policy. Strangely, the policy was not developed in conjunction with the EE committee but by the HR consultant only, and then presented to the EE committee, after which the consultant revised the policy. This affected issues of ownership and "voice", which manifested in the working of the committee. The consultant played the most active role in EE committee meetings. While the managing director had planned to train the HR manager to handle the EE Act's requirements, this did not happen and remained the function of the HR consultant. Five out of the nine members of the EE committee were coloured females. Meetings observed by the researcher were dominated by the HR consultant and management members, who were all white. Some members were totally silent, and the only member of colour who asserted herself was the shop steward. The result was an intervention which not only undermined principles of inclusivity (which one would expect is aligned with a commitment to diversity) but also one that had no impact on anyone in the organisation.

A similar dynamic was observed at SFPC, where the EETC was also dominated by management and used as a forum to "speak down" to staff, rather than a platform for staff to raise their concerns. The effect here was that many people did not even know the EETC existed, and if they did, very few knew what its function was and how to access it.

8.4.3. *Poor facilitation*

The success of a workshop that grapples with questions of diversity is not simply determined by its content. Possibly even more significant is the facilitation of what are potentially very difficult emotional issues. Good diversity facilitators are schooled in handling highly sensitive human interchanges. Even the best facilitators are faced with difficult situations and it takes a fair amount of expertise to deal with them in a way that leaves all participants challenged but also empowered. Poor facilitation is not in evidence in all the cases where workshops were conducted: LGD, for example, had no such feedback. Two cases, however, illustrate this point very well: SAPS and CO.

At SAPS, the researcher observed a workshop that was facilitated by two trainers who hadn't worked together before. One facilitator took a light-hearted approach in which participants were encouraged to loosen up through spontaneous activities like song, while the other was more serious and traditional in his instruction. During a later interview, the more casual of the two facilitators stressed the manner in which he had differed to his colleague: it seemed that he hadn't been impressed with his partner's approach. For a workshop dealing with such sensitive issues, disagreement and tension between facilitators can potentially be very damaging. The fact that the facilitators had not met before also amounts to bad planning.

The CO workshops seemed to generate a lot of racial emotion, without providing participants with the tools for dealing with it. Three white females found the workshops to be a negative experience; one of them felt that she had been left to "defend the white race". A black CO employee reported a negative experience due to a racist remark by a white colleague:

... some things that were said, they also had a negative impact on other people like myself, for example – um – the fact that – um – the fact that black people learn slow, that they are not as competent, I have to be honest it haunted me for about four months, because there were situations where I could give my input by showing initiative, you know in the work environment you don't only do what you are told to do ... you can foresee this will be a problem tomorrow, let me be creative and solve it now. But you know living with that feeling that I'm not as creative as other people, you know it really gets you into a situation where you do what you're expected to do, you don't see the importance to show initiative ...

The above quote shows the damage a badly facilitated workshop can wreak. Not only did it "haunt" the respondent, but it started to impact on her contribution and performance at work. Rather than leveraging the diversity she brought to the organisation, she had been silenced.

8.5. Environmental challenges and hurdles

Diversity management does not feature high on our scorecard ... we have more than enough on our plates ... besides, it is a very sensitive issue ... (LIC)

8.5.1. Lack of priority

This theme is very closely related to the previous one, but whereas the previous theme focused on the interventions themselves, this theme considers the context in which these interventions occur.

One of the biggest hurdles to diversity work being successful, or even being implemented in the first place, is the fact that it is rarely very high on the organisation's list of priorities. Out of the

12 organisations we investigated, only two had made and operationalised any substantial “business case” for the diversity intervention under scrutiny (LSAM and CO). Most had (as mentioned in theme 2: Reduction of diversity to EE) simply reacted to legislated requirements for basic demographic transformation, and had no clear and coherent diversity plan. As a result, the interventions were mostly haphazardly implemented, as seen in theme 4.

Although the business case has been criticised for obfuscating questions of social justice (Kersten, 2000), it can be argued that at least it creates an imperative for constructive engagement of diversity issues in an environment where it wouldn’t necessarily feature at all. Developing a business case for any organisation requires in part that it finds ways of interpolating diversity concerns through core business, thereby generating urgency and prioritising the organisation’s success in diversity-related matters; it follows that this creates a more sustainable environment for diversity-related interventions and activities. Lack of priority, then, translates into lack of urgency and ultimately a significant organisational hurdle for any diversity practitioner to negotiate. A practitioner could have the most theoretically sound intervention, but without buy-in from the people who are to implement it in the everyday running of the organisation (usually, middle management and professionals, as discussed in the next section), even the best intervention is likely to fail.

8.5.2. Attrition on diversity practitioners

Another significant hurdle to the realisation of successful diversity interventions is the internal and external attrition that these passively hostile and unreceptive environments wreak on practitioners. Diversity work is by its very nature exhausting, as one is dealing with deep human anxieties, pain, denial, etc. All the diversity practitioners we spoke to reported feeling this exhaustion to a greater or lesser degree. Unreceptive or hostile organisational contexts only exacerbate it.

8.6. Management resistance

Resistance to participate, they always think, hey, that I can’t, maybe I’m going to be put in a position where I will be focused on or looked at or penalised. (CO)

The role of management is crucial in the success of diversity interventions. The case studies showed that a lack of commitment by management for transformation processes (most starkly seen in the case of SCM, FSC, SFPC and LIC) was sure to minimise the chances of the diversity intervention

delivering the desired results. Results were also poor in cases where the management implemented the diversity intervention but did not follow through (such as at FI). In other cases, the intervention was undermined by management's unenthusiastic pursuance of diversity actions.

Theme 4 explored in some detail the haphazard and ineffectual implementation of diversity interventions in a number of organisations. This implementation is largely the responsibility of middle management (and, to a lesser extent, professionals). It is therefore middle management who need to be held accountable for the failures of many of these interventions. Having said that, however, theme 5 explored the lack of strategic priority given to diversity work in the organisations in general: there were no clear strategies, plans and therefore structures to support implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Why, in contexts that do not reward diversity-related achievements, would anyone bother?

Thus, management's resistance to transformation is not a simple phenomenon. Firstly, it is important to make the distinction between middle-management/professionals (whose main role is implementation) and top management (whose main role is planning and strategy). It was usually the case that where there was a coherent diversity plan, based in a business case (LSAM and CO), top management were committed to transformation and leading from the front. In these cases, interventions fell flat in their implementation by middle management/professionals. A respondent at CO referred to the need to "practice what you preach". This was directed to senior management, who did the preaching, but middle- and lower-level management were also not putting this "preaching" in to practice. There were also cases where top management stated their commitment to transformation – and could see the importance and strategic benefit thereof – but had either been poorly advised by their practitioner (SFPC and SAPS are just two examples) or did not allow the practitioner to implement what they saw as necessary (LGD is a good example). In these cases there was a stated commitment but no real drive and therefore no real strategy and plan. It can therefore be understood that middle-management/professional levels were implementing interventions haphazardly and to little effect. Finally, there were those in top management who openly did not buy in to the whole idea of transformation. IHL provided a good example from a member of the transformation office:

Middle and top management (except for one) have not asked for any intervention from this office as far as diversity is concerned. Short and sweet, there's been no interest.

The resistance of management (top and middle) to transformation processes fell largely under two main spheres of activity: resistance to implementing these processes in their departments or areas of

accountability and resistance to actual participation in the activities themselves (especially in workshops). Each sphere carried its own particular complexities.

8.6.1. Resistance to implementation

Lack of commitment from management translated into half-hearted diversity interventions where not enough time or money was allocated (SCM, SAPS and IHL), where the intervention was not open to all employees (SCM) or where there was little motivation from all staff to participate.

Inadequate communication was one of the ways in which a lack of commitment manifested. This included not making available the EE policies to all employees (Sekupu, SFPC, etc.) or even, in the case of RC, not making documentation available to the people implementing the diversity intervention. In the latter case, no documents were available to explain the duties and entitlements of the HIV/Aids peer educators and the case-study researchers had to find this information through interviews. “As peer educators, we are supposed to work together with management. But they just leave it up to us,” one respondent said. Indeed, it seems that RC had mostly shifted the problem of HIV/Aids onto the employees. For example, when an employee fell very sick due to Aids-related causes, staff collected money for groceries and other costs for her and her child. Inadequate communication at RC caused some staff members to think that the positions of peer educators were reserved for black staff, even though the process was one of voluntary application. This reinforced the idea of Aids as a “black disease” and an “African problem”. Many employees were also uninformed about the programme and the educators.

Lack of implementation arose out of an environment that did not reward managers if they performed well in this area or held them accountable if they did not. This did not go unnoticed by staff, and 76% of the interviewed employees at Sekupu believed that line managers were not held accountable for EE in their sections. Further to this, diversity was seen as a “soft-issue” and was easily relegated to being the “last thing in their minds”, to be dealt with after the real work. According to one employee at Sekupu: “Managers are here to stop fire, they are very defensive. How can they do diversity management? Soft issues are the last thing in their minds.”

It is obvious that diversity management had little or no priority in the managers’ day-to-day activities described above, and that this could, in part, be the source of their defensiveness. This is because, in the case of Sekupu, diversity had little or no priority in the organisation’s strategic objectives. As has been mentioned in theme 5, the lack of prioritisation of diversity work is a reason for diversity interventions to fail.

Lack of strategic imperative often resulted in no coherent plan of action, which resulted in no structures for support. Respondents at IHL similarly experienced a lack of prioritisation and accountability by management. The following IHL respondent pointed out:

If it is not linked to performance appraisal and performance management, it's a dead duck in the water. You cannot do it. If it is not linked to the vice-chancellors, why should the dean and why should the HOD? It should be performance-management driven.

What the above remark suggests is that there needs to be systems and structures that hold management responsible and that integrate diversity into the core activities of everyday business. It also explains why many middle and line managers were not implementing transformation processes with any great success: they didn't have to.

8.6.2. Resistance to participation

Middle management's resistance was not only evident in their lack of enthusiasm for implementing plans, activities and structures from top management. Even in cases like CO, where there were clear structures to engage questions of diversity, middle management resisted participation:

This diversity it's now a name but we aren't doing enough as well, we just call it on Wednesday meetings, we got this subject on diversity and, well, I don't know if anybody is too scared to say anything or just to get the meeting over or they don't know what to say. I think there should actually be ... it's like the same as managers or the head office, we ask them to be more involved. Why don't they come or we get somebody to speak a little bit on or to give us a seminar; some people say we should get a motivational speaker to talk about diversity. (CO)

Noticeably, according to this respondent, the committee was dysfunctional and ineffectual. Members did not contribute and the respondent subscribes this to possible fear! There was clearly leadership required in this area. The leadership, however, were not interested in participation. It is hardly surprising, then, that the committee weren't either.

Once again, however, this resistance by middle management needs to be understood in more complex terms. The opening quote sheds some light on why management may have been so resistant to participate in these forums: "Resistance to participate, they always think, hey, that I can't, maybe I'm going to be put in a position where I will be focused on or looked at or penalised" (CO).

Participation in processes which deal with diversity in any meaningful way are potentially exposing, and therefore experienced as threatening at both a personal and a professional level.

8.6.3. Racism getting in the way

Resistance, however, cannot only be accounted for by lack of support and fear. There is another fairly obvious reason why management may be resistant to transformation: the demographics of top management in all the cases remained largely unchanged, i.e. white and male. And because management resisted transformation processes, its attitudes remained largely untransformed. As the following two employees at LSAM point out:

I think our management team apart from [a particular manager] is 80/20 white. Eighty per cent is lily white ...

I can say with the managers there is a lot of apartheid and that is the reason.

The dilemma is that the implementation of transformation processes is being left to those who are most in need of these processes, and therefore the most unlikely to embrace them. As a colleague put it: “It’s like asking turkeys to vote for Christmas.”

Inside of this dilemma, it becomes obvious that some management may (actively or passively) scupper diversity and equity interventions. In some organisations the management responsible for some aspects of implementation blatantly did not buy in to the diversity intervention. The first example in this regard is SFPC: there, the EE committee was highly dysfunctional due to management dominance and a general climate of mistrust. This is not surprising, however, given the prevailing attitude towards EE, which is illustrated by the following quotation from a SFPC senior manager (and member of the EETC):

That’s the sort of stuff that one always has in these big factory environments, is that you’re going to have people who just, just want to stir trouble for the sake of stirring trouble. But as I say, there is a younger set coming in and a group which is not so jaded by the past of the country ... I don’t want to get into the whole political thing. I want to look at things from “who can do the job, who can’t do the job and who wants to do the job?” And not just for the sake of, you know, shame, they’re previously disadvantaged. I’m going to have to make an exception.

It is problematic that being “political” is equated with being “jaded” or a “troublemaker”: this delegitimises restitutive measures and reduces them to exercises in sympathy, rather than exercises

holding legitimate social or economic weight or even making “business sense”. It is highly unlikely that someone with this attitude is going to drive EE in any meaningful way, which will have obvious consequences for its success.

8.7. The predominance of racism

He said, he said, “these people, these people cannot file flight plans because they are capable of cutting wood”. (CO)

The more you mix, you start adopting the white culture. It helped me a lot to work according to the plan, delivery dates. Black people have a culture of relaxing and that is one of the things that slows the process. (A black woman, IHL)

This still feels like a white company and I am an outsider. (CO)

Race and racism presented as *the* most salient diversity issue for respondents across the cases. There may be a number of reasons for this continued prevalence of race: most interventions were operating within an EE paradigm and are therefore only highlighting race as a concern for transformation (as seen in themes 2 and 3); race has had historical (and pervading) significance for shaping people’s lives in this country; and, given the extent to which our organisations have not transformed, black people are experiencing high levels of frustration, further pushing race to the forefront of their experience. Whatever the reasons, race and racism have shaped the experiences of respondents in these organisations in significant ways. Although the previous themes (especially theme 6) have touched on this, this theme explores this in more depth.

The effects of race and racism were felt through *all* the organisations, even those with the more thorough interventions. For example, despite LSAM’s seemingly concerted efforts at addressing diversity, at 19%, racial tension was still the most frequently mentioned type of diversity tension – slightly higher than the occurrence of gender tension (17%). Both were more prevalent than tensions over remuneration (16%).

8.7.1. Mixed feelings

It is important to note that despite continuing difficulties with race and racism, interventions did have an impact. Diversity work can, and did, affect small but important changes. In contrast to LSAM, LGD seemed to have had more success in its three-day workshop intervention. Half of respondents reported no change in attitude but a LGD white male senior manager’s reaction to the

training was: "... it could be uncomfortable, but recognise what is happening and that to me is the most important thing; if you can recognise it, you can deal with it."

Other staff members thought it worked as people got to talk to each other; it created awareness, confidence and mutual understanding. A black female staff member said: "The training changed my perception about whites ...". An Indian senior manager compared attitudes to pre-1994 and said, "definitely, there has been change". A black female staff member said:

Before, I had this perception that I grew up with about white people: always I knew they are bad people but it made me realise people are different and there are stereotypes out there but we are to deal with the situation. (LGD)

Interestingly, some staff felt the training was too focused on white males as they were seen as the "targets" of EE. A white male LGD staff member said: "Diversity is not a white male-based thing, it's for all people to work together."

There were, however, mixed feelings about the success of interventions across different groups *within* in organisations, especially across race and levels of hierarchy. An analysis conducted across all 12 cases (by Parveen Brown, diversity studies honours thesis, UCT, 2008) shows that, overall, management levels had considered the interventions to have been successful, whereas staff in general reported the opposite. This was particularly true for SFPC, where despite management claims of success, staff had taken a vote of no confidence in the EETC because of slow change. The staff were especially unhappy with inconsistent recruitment processes. Floor workers expressed most concerns about the EETC's functioning and lack of responsiveness to concerns like favouritism towards coloured workers, unfair promotion, inconsistency in making temporary workers permanent, gender-insensitive practices and problematic performance-management implementation. Coloured and white employees at higher levels believed everybody got on well, while black employees on the factory floor generally differed on this opinion. These experiences of the hierarchy at SFPC are inherently racialised.

8.7.2. *Everyday racisms*

As mentioned in themes 5 and 6, the success of the interventions was a function of the environment in which they were being implemented. One of the characteristics of an unreceptive or hostile environment may be what Philomena Essed (1991) calls "everyday racism", which involves the subtle, everyday ways in which racism happens, and which is always underpinned (consciously or

unconsciously) by racist attitudes. These “everyday racisms” manifested in a variety of ways across the cases.

SFPC’s structure was highly hierarchical, even with different eating spaces for management and floor workers. Temporary workers were compelled to wear red caps to differentiate them from the rest of the staff. Language reflected the different classes of workers, with phrases such as: “us and them”, “the people”, “the floor”, “down on the floor”, “up there” and “from top to bottom”. Given the racialised nature of the hierarchy and casualisation practices, these hierarchical divisions created a racial split during tea breaks and lunches, reinforcing the idea of “naturalised” racial division.

There were also many ways in which the credibility and authority of black employees was undermined through everyday racist practise. Black middle managers at LSAM reported that their subordinates would circumvent them in reporting, preferring to go to a black manager’s senior white manager, and in the process completely undermining their authority. One junior manager at LSAM reported:

Yes, I think there are a lot of pressure on this guys; maybe they can not report straight to you because you are a black manager. I prefer to rather report to a general manager instead of going to [packing] manager; no, I go straight to the next level. On my side, black managers don’t last, especially in this plant.

Another example of how black managers were undermined was the organisation’s tendency not to send black employees to represent the company. The following black male manager at Sekupu described his experience, which he ascribed to the fact that black people were not trusted:

The one issue I have a problem with is that when it comes to the outside world, there is a tendency not to send Africans as representatives of the company; maybe it is fear that the guys could be poached, or may embarrass the company. Is it a lack of trust! There is that unwillingness to send Africans to outside forums even in areas where it could make sense and the EECF has no powers over this.

At IHL, examples emerged of how black people were excluded through language. Black staff reported how white Afrikaans speakers deliberately spoke Afrikaans so that black staff – who largely did not speak Afrikaans – would not understand the conversations, and were thus excluded. This black woman at IHL, who was an immigrant from another African country and a senior lecturer, shared:

The Afrikaans language is a problem. In meetings there was Afrikaans people and was not considering the fact that I didn't understand. It is still going on. I don't understand Afrikaans at all.

This particular form of deliberate racialised exclusion also occurred at RC. A black Xhosa-speaking woman reported the following incident with her coloured male manager:

Interviewer: *Are all employees treated in the same way?*

RC respondent: *No, no, no. Especially the floor manager, he's got too much racism, ja. Like when I am trying to make an order by him and I think that the best person to ask is the floor manager, so like I know that he can speak English but I find that he takes the coloured person. When I make an order by him he speaks Afrikaans to this coloured guy who then must translate it to me. And this other manager, I say I must make an order, but he says "What did you say? Write it down!" Why must I write it down if he can hear what I am saying? Things like that. He thinks that he is better than us; why must he be rude to us? If you see him and you want to make an order and a coloured guy comes, then it's meant to be first come first served but he will always serve that coloured guy first and tell me to wait.*

FI provided further examples of exclusion through language. It also provided examples of how black people were excluded from social events. One FI member of staff reported how it was commonly accepted that although black people were invited to baby showers, they were not actually welcome to attend:

Racism. Whites keep to themselves and speak deliberately a language that other races would not understand. Black people behave this way as well. There's no accommodation of each other. For example, in the majority, baby showers are organised on racial lines. If you get a present from other races, they would not necessarily attend such events.

Subtle, everyday exclusion and undermining took many different forms. The following quote from a black male senior manager at IHL illustrates two more; his despondency is palpable:

When I do something in a "white environment" they will always ask me, "Where are you from, are you from xxx?" Which I don't think is relevant. I will give you an example of an assessment workshop that I have attended, when they wanted input and I give my input it was OK, and then somebody else (white) says the very same thing I have said then all of a sudden it was a brilliant idea – that made me feel that I'm not expected to say anything of value so I kept quiet after that.

To have to explain where you are from when you do something "correctly" (as if you can't possibly be a capable black South African) or to constantly go unheard or unrecognised in meetings is not only exhausting, but completely demotivating. The above response shows how these experiences

served to silence and quash this person's contribution, rather than drawing on him as a "strategic resource", as was intended in IHL's policy documents.

8.7.3. *Internalised racism*

Given the evidence of racism in these organisations, it is probably not surprising that racism had been internalised by some employees. A black woman at IHL said:

In the beginning I experienced a feeling of loneliness. At times I feel it would be much better to have a black colleague to talk to because of a cultural background, sharing talks, jokes, etc. I've learned a lot from my colleagues. Through time, the boundary disappeared. The longer you stay with people with different cultural and race, the more you learned to adapt to each other's cultural. White people find the black people noisy, very slow in doing things, in reasoning, in acting, in doing things. The more you mix you start adopting the white culture. It helped me a lot to work according to the plan – delivery dates. Black people have a culture of relaxing and that is one of the things that slows the process.

It is clear that she had internalised racist narratives of black people being lazy, and that in order to be effective in her work environment she had to "start adopting the white culture". She talked about people adapting to "each other's cultural" but it is she has adopted the white culture, not the other way round. There are two things going on here. First is that black is equated with "relaxing", and white with meeting "delivery dates". Second is that "white culture" is rewarded in this organisation. This white culture may have many more characteristics (like language, ways of dressing and particular attitudes) but all of this is conflated with productivity. Thus, it is not just productivity that is rewarded, but everything else associated with it, too. That is because "black culture" and its associations (like language, dress and values) is conflated with laziness. The effect it had on the speaker is that she could not see herself as black and productive – rather, she felt she had to become "white".

There has been much written on the damage that internalised ideologies wreak on people's wellbeing (Fanon, 1966), but these ideologies are also survival mechanisms for people in environments which are hostile to who they are. It becomes clear that the role of any South African diversity intervention must be to change these hostile environments so that people do not need to resort to such self-destructive measures.

8.8. Climates of fear and suspicion

I think victimisation is still reality. I have seen victimisation – it's not just a fear within. And to solve this, who do go and you speak to, 'cause the other manager is friends with the one that is victimising you ... and they talk to each other. (CO)

A number of organisations exhibited high levels of fear and suspicion. Staff feared management, management were suspicious of staff, and colleagues were suspicious of each other. Staff reported victimisation by those in positions of authority (see the CO quote above).

At SFPC, fear pervaded the organisation, as described by an EETC member:

Ag, people are afraid, man, people are afraid like, I always tell them here at [SFPC] it's not a democracy, it's like a how do you call it there where the general takes over and you must just now obey like communism or something in that to that effect, man, where you must just obey everything that they say; it's not like you can have your say, because if you have your say it's like they're not physically killing you but mentally they do so; the people are like afraid, man ...

Similarly, LIC had a management style which was described as autocratic, with a high fear of victimisation. Communication was top-down and management was intolerant of new democratic entitlements: “You have rights but as soon as you want to use it, management gets upset and wants to discipline you,” said a respondent.

Given some managers' attitudes towards people who were active in transformation – where “political” is seen as being problematic (See theme 5: Resistant management) – it is not difficult to see why staff may have felt intimidated to access their basic rights, including those to non-discrimination. Everyday racisms wore down the energy even of senior people (See theme 7: The predominance of racism), so it is not surprising that people in subordinate positions were silenced on issues of transformation.

Conversations about victimisation are crucial in conversations about transformation in South African organisations. Because victimisation is a blatant exercise of power by those who have it over those who don't, it is completely at odds with diversity and has serious implications for the implementation of any diversity intervention. It is also very likely to play out over racial, gendered, sexualised, cultural, etc. lines, as these categories are constellated by power relations. How does one start to engage with the sensitive issues of race, gender and sexuality when people are too afraid to raise issues about basic labour rights? The discussion reverts back to whether organisations are providing enabling environments for diversity interventions to take place. As the cases clearly

show, diversity work requires a receptive, supportive and safe space to be effective. Without that, any intervention is likely to be unsuccessful.

9. OVERVIEW – THE EIGHT THEMES

Overall, the case studies found that the level of meaningful engagement with diversity was variable and, even in the best cases, lacking in deep transformative potential. This was consistent with the analysis of practitioners' definitions of diversity, as documented in the article "Aligning the Diversity 'Rubik' Cube", where only two practitioners exhibited an understanding of diversity that created the potential for deep transformative action. In a very few cases we saw the integration of diversity into core business operations, resulting in more substantial and systemically supported interventions. Mostly, however, we saw very little understanding of the importance and value of working with diversity successfully; rather, there was a compliance-motivated reaction to EE legislation.

The conflation of EE and diversity was a particularly problematic trend. Most organisations continued to conflate diversity with EE compliance, thereby reducing diversity to a numbers game and keeping discriminatory power relations intact. While achieving gender and racial representivity is important, EE is only a tool in the larger scheme of diversity management. The cases also showed, however, that without a deeper commitment to transformation, EE initiatives did not occur inside a coherent and meaningful context, and therefore struggled to yield meaningful change. This was seen, for example, in organisations with high black staff turnover where, although they were "getting the numbers right" in terms of recruitment, the racially hostile environment led to resignations by black staff.

At another level, however, most organisations were still struggling with simply "getting the numbers right". Eleven years after the EE Act was implemented, a wide numerical gap persists between white males in top-management positions and black people and women in such positions. Race and gender intersected as black women continued to be dominant in the bottom end of organisational pyramids. The organisations we investigated look remarkably like organisations in the USA, despite the fact that the racial demographics in the USA are practically opposite to what they are in South Africa. The profound immovability that we saw in the organisations' demographics is a concern in that it perpetuates and entrenches the notion that management is white and male, and workers are black (male and female). The concern is also that the racialised

hierarchies we see in our organisations are being normalised – an ideological condition that makes transformation of these organisations even more difficult.

It is noticeable that organisations which had been “forced” to make the “case” for transformation displayed a keener commitment to redressing unjust practices (especially on the basis of race) than organisations which had not. The “case” was either motivated by the reliance on a government tender (like CO) or simply an understanding the realities of operating in diverse social environments (which LSAM, as a multinational, had shown). These organisations were amongst those which implemented the most robust and sustainable interventions, based firmly in the relevance, value and importance of diversity for their core business.

Having said that, even in cases where interventions were more robust, experiences of marginalisation and silencing remained a problem. Old power patterns were actively entrenched in all the organisations, with respondents reporting fear of victimisation should they upset the status quo. Racism and white resistance against the transformation of power relations were reported across all the case studies. Interestingly, resistance was most strongly exhibited by middle rather than top management, and was most keenly felt in instances where managers were responsible for implementing of the aspects of the interventions, like attending EE committee meetings or mentoring EE appointments.

Implementation of transformation initiatives exhibited as a serious problem. This was, in part, a function of the interventions themselves, which did not create structures to hold and sustain the initiatives. This could include measures to hold accountable those who were responsible for implementation, i.e. middle and line management. Given that these levels remained largely white and male, and that whites and males largely perceived transformation as hostile to themselves, it was not surprising that we saw resistance here; this makes accountability structures all the more crucial if we are to see any real change on our organisations. It also highlights how important deep transformative efforts are, because unless we can first change the power dynamics and then the heads and hearts of those who wield that power, South African organisations will continue to “clone” (Essed, 2002) themselves based on current racial and gendered arrangements.

Interestingly, discrimination on the basis of gender seemed more flagrant than on the basis of race. Respondents reported job losses in cases of pregnancy and managers openly declared sexual harassment to be a “fact of life”. However, gender discrimination was normalised within organisational practices while racial discrimination was publicly accepted as taboo. More disturbing even was the silence on issues such as homophobia, xenophobia, cultural and religious intolerance, etc. None of the organisations or diversity practitioners in the cases we conducted were dealing with these very significant sources of inequality and oppression in our society. It could be argued that the

singular focus on race, and the enormous struggle in addressing even that, may be obscuring other (as significant) sources of exclusion and marginalisation.

From a critical diversity perspective, it is worrying that there was *no* conversation about relationships of power. There was no engagement with the notion that organisations are social sites which play out the power relationships we see throughout our society. Organisations were constructed as “bounded”, and as a result there was no engagement with the social, political, economic and historical contexts of these organisations. It was this limited understanding of what organisations are, and how power operates within and through them, that made the interventions we examined ineffectual. The interventions were, in different ways, supposed to address issues of inequality, discrimination, etc., but they were doing so from an unhelpful theoretical space: any attempt to deal with these issues without a deep and honest engagement of power relations is going to be frustrating and ultimately unhelpful. Thus, EE takes us so far, the business case takes us a little further, but deep transformation requires more.

It is important to consider the business case as a strategy for engaging with diversity. Although a pragmatic point of entry for any diversity practitioner, the business case has been criticised by critical diversity theorists for obscuring the political nature of the struggles that diversity interventions should undertake. For a critical diversity theorist, the question is not whether the “bottom line” is positively impacted, but rather whether racial, gender, sexual, etc. justice is being done. However, the two approaches need not be disparate. As explored in our article (Kelly, Wale, Soudien & Steyn, 2007), it is only through the excavation of constructions of race, gender etc., and how they undermine our humanity, that people have access to their full agency and potential; only then, if motivated, can they fully contribute to any organisation. As the cases indicate, a business case, without its eye on larger questions of social justice, is limited in that it leaves old power relations unexamined and intact. The challenge for South African organisations and diversity practitioners, is to operationalise an engagement which does both.

10. THEORETICAL TOOLS FOR CRITICAL DIVERSITY PRACTICE IN SOUTH AFRICA

This engagement is no small task. As we saw in the case studies, even with the best intentions it is very easy to get it wrong. What is required is informed and skilled engagement, with tools that are equipped to facilitate processes of social justice and which are relevant to our South African circumstances. The following section provides two such tools. These emerge out of a long, careful and considered engagement with the data presented through this project.

10.1. The practitioner-organisation interface

Although this project started out as an evaluation of diversity practitioners' practice, it became clear that the contexts in which diversity practitioners are conducting their work can determine the "success" of an intervention more than the intervention itself. As the cases have shown, organisational environments hostile to or unsupportive of transformation can and have scuppered the most theoretically sound diversity and equity interventions (for example, LSAM); the effect is that these organisations remain untransformed and therefore hostile to transformation to a greater or lesser degree. At the same time, however, theoretically poor interventions are part of the reason that organisations are not experiencing the kinds of shifts necessary to realise deep transformation. Thus, the success of any diversity intervention is a function of the interface between practitioner and organisation, with one enabling (or disabling) the other. They are co-dependant, so if one is unsound, the whole exercise is likely to fail.

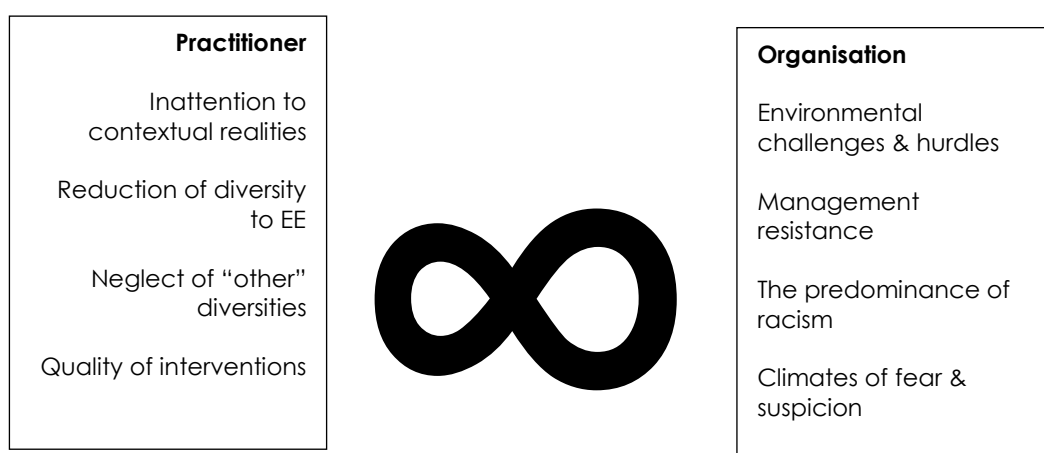


Figure 5: The practitioner/organisation interface

After careful consideration, we can start to distinguish where the responsibility for each theme lies: which issues lie on the side of the diversity practitioners and which lie on the side of the organisations. For example, practitioners are responsible for not engaging with the sometimes challenging contextual realities of organisations (mergers, retrenchments, etc.) thereby making their otherwise sound interventions irrelevant to the core functioning of the organisation. On the other hand, organisations may reject interventions that address key issues facing their core business functioning (sabotage of black and female staff, high turnover of black and female staff, loss of creativity) because they will not acknowledge and address racism and sexism. Thus, each of the

themes has an interactive dimension and co-dependent quality, and the success of any intervention relies on that interface being healthy.

The implications are significant for diversity practice in South Africa (and, for that matter, across the globe): both the practitioners (and their interventions) and the organisations need to follow certain basic guidelines in order for any intervention to be successful and the potential for deep transformation to be realised.

10.2. The diversity literate organisation

The way ahead requires that both practitioners and organisations start to operate in a framework that engages diversity critically. Importantly, the metric becomes social justice, not simply return on investment – although these may not necessarily be disparate ends. Ultimately, it is the role of organisations to marry their business with that of creating a more just and equal society, and find innovative ways of doing business that are commensurate to these ends. This is a large undertaking and starts to enter into debates about what the role of business is in our society, etc., which are beyond the scope of this project. However, within its scope are the parameters and orientations of diversity interventions, and it is clear that these need to be located inside of a conversation for social justice.

The original intention of this project was to develop codes of good practice in order to standardise diversity practice in South Africa. Five years of research has, however, illuminated that it is not more procedures and legislation that is missing but, fundamentally, a shared vision of what is desirable and possible in terms of social justice in our organisations. What is absent are the language and tools to engage this vision. The task at hand is to develop a shared language for diversity practitioners, management and staff in order to facilitate a conversation about diversity that has social justice as its end.

The second conceptual tool generated out of this research is Steyn's (2010) notion of the "diversity literate organisation". This is an aspirational model of an organisation that has the tools to engage diversity from within a concern for social justice. Steyn's concept of "diversity literacy" is a set of "reading practices": ways of perceiving and responding to the social climate and prevalent structures of oppression, exclusion, marginalisation and discrimination. The analytical criteria employed to evaluate the presence of diversity literacy in an organisation is measured to the extent that people across the whole organisation possess (Steyn, 2010):

1. **a recognition of the symbolic and material value of dominant identities, such as whiteness, heterosexuality, masculinity, ablebodiedness, etc.** (for example, its people will recognise how what is considered “normal” and “desirable” is racialised [i.e., white] and gendered [i.e., masculine]);
2. **the analytic skills to unpack how systems of oppression intersect, interlock, co-construct and constitute each other** (for example, people will be able to understand why organisations still see racialised and gendered hierarchies: white males in top management and black women in cleaning positions);
3. **the definition of oppressive systems such as racism as current social problems rather than historical legacies** (for example, people will understand that black people experience discrimination, exclusion and marginalisation on the basis of their racialisation *now*, and not just under apartheid);
4. **an understanding that social identities are a learned outcome of social practices** (for example, people will understand that there are no “natural” roles or abilities for men and women, that men and women *learn* roles, and that these are defined in terms of gender power relations);
5. **a diversity grammar and vocabulary that facilitates discussion of race, racism and antiracism as well as the parallel concepts employed in the analysis of other forms of oppression** (for example, people will share understandings of racism, sexism, etc. and, using these understandings, be able to have a conversation that is honest and empowering);
6. **the ability to translate (interpret) coded hegemonic practices** (for example, people will be able to recognise everyday racism for what it is: racism);
7. **an understanding of the ways that diversity hierarchies and institutionalised oppressions are mediated by class inequality** (for example, people will understand that who is rich and who is poor, who is management and who is working class is racialised, and why that is so);

8. **an engagement with the issues of transformation of oppressive systems with the aim of deepening democracy in all levels of social organisation** (for example, managers exhibit as much concern for staff experiences of racism, sexism, etc. as they do for operational concerns).

These guiding criteria form useful (and currently absent) goalposts for any diversity intervention working towards a more inclusive, non-discriminatory and empowering organisational context. How they translate into organisationally relevant *everyday* practices (the establishment of structures, policies, assessments, codes of behaviour, etc.) is for the diversity practitioner and organisational leadership to decide. This is important as all of these practices must be responsive to the organisation's context in terms of its industry, history, size, location, etc. Nevertheless, an intervention that results in a highly diversity literate organisation is much more likely to create conditions for more inclusive, non-discriminatory, empowering practices.

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